



U. S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland, 1980-1981

Douglas J. MacEachin

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

The full title and meaning of each of these abbreviations is given in the text and/or the notes where they are first used. Use of the abbreviations is kept to a minimum. Some, particularly the Polish acronyms, are given as a matter of information to the readers as to how they were used at the time, and others identify references to documents and media sources. After that, the author has tried to limit their use to the practical end of avoiding repetitive formulations.

DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik—German Democratic Republic—East Germany
KKP	Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza—National Coordinating Commission (of Solidarity)
KOK	Komitet Obrony Kraju—Committee for the Defense of the Homeland, usually translated in U.S. references as “National Defense Committee”
KOR	Komitet Obrony Robotników—Committee for the Defense of Workers (dissident group)
KSS	Komitet Samoobrony Społecznej—Social Self-Defense Committee (expansion of KOR dissident group)
KZ	Komisja Zakładowa—Factory Commission (of Solidarity)
MKR	Miedzyzakładowy Komisja Robotnicza—Interfactory Workers Commission (Solidarity regional organization, successor to MKZ, defined below)
MKS	Miedzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy—Interfactory Strike Committee (initial interfactory organization, in Gdańsk region)
MKZ	Miedzyzakładowy Komitet Założycielski—Interfactory Founding Committee (Solidarity’s regional organization, successor to MKS, established in regions nationwide)
NSZZ	Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy—Independent Self-Governing Trade Union (as Solidarity defined itself)
PUWP	Polish United Workers Party (in English)

PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza—Polish United Workers party
RMP	Ruch Młodej Polski—Young Poland Movement (student group)
ROPCiO	Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela—Movement for the Defense of Human Rights (civil opposition movement)

Publication titles/references:

CWIHP	<i>Cold War International History Project Bulletin</i>
NID	<i>National Intelligence Daily</i> —current intelligence reporting, six days per week, drafted by the CIA but coordinated with other agencies
NIE	<i>National Intelligence Estimate</i> —in-depth assessment of developing situation and/or long term outlook. Prepared through interagency process, with views defined as representing all agencies, with agreement and differences specifically identified
NYT	<i>New York Times</i>
WP	<i>Washington Post</i>

U.S. Government terms:

DCI	Director of Central Intelligence—serves both as head of the CIA and as chief executive officer of the collection of agencies and departments known as the “Intelligence Community”
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency—military intelligence organization serving the Joint Chiefs of Staff and responsible for integrating military intelligence
INR	State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research—director of which is an assistant secretary of state

Introduction: Background and Process

On 13 December 1981 the Polish regime imposed martial law to crush the civil opposition being led by the Solidarity labor union and diverse groups of dissidents. Many U.S. policy officials declared publicly at the time that they had been surprised by this move and that the U.S. government as a whole had not been prepared for it. Some officials speaking on the record and many others speaking off the record said there clearly had been a failure of intelligence, both the collection of information and the analysis of information that was available.

Just two years earlier, at the end of December 1979, U.S. officials had, again by their own testimony at the time, experienced a similar surprise with the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. This was also attributed to intelligence failure, and was followed by a National Security Council staff request that intelligence agencies examine the implications of the Afghan experience for their ability to warn of other Soviet military moves.

These two “warning failures” took place in the first three years following the initiation of measures by the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) intended to improve warning processes for such events. His actions were in response to congressional direction resulting from a review of intelligence performance after what was then the latest surprise—the revolution in Iran that erupted at the end of 1978. The congressional study characterized the lack of intelligence warning of the events in Iran as part of a pattern, citing as other examples the August 1968 Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia and the October 1973 “Yom Kippur War” in the Middle East.¹ Needless to say, the measures implemented by the DCI clearly did not have their intended effect.

Perceptions of the intelligence failure on the Polish military crackdown took on a new dimension in 1986, when it became publicly known that a Polish mil-

1. U.S. Congress, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, “Iran: Evaluation of U.S. Intelligence Performance Prior to November 1978,” Staff Report, Government Printing Office (GPO).

itary officer who had participated in drafting plans for its implementation had been a CIA agent. The press reported in June 1986 that this officer had escaped to the United States a month before the Polish regime carried out the plan. In 1987 the Polish officer gave a detailed description of his role in a publicly reported interview, making clear that he had begun providing information on the planning for the military suppression well over a year before it was carried out. At that point, the charges turned from incompetence in collection and analysis to an exchange of accusations of dysfunctional procedures for handling the information and excuses for not acting on it.²

Probably the most appropriate description, however, was given by Secretary of State Alexander Haig long before the story of the Polish military officer's reporting became widely known. As is discussed in Chapter 13, he said in a public statement shortly after the Poles initiated martial law that the United States had been well aware of what the Polish regime was preparing to do but had not believed they would do it. Exactly the same statement could be applied to the earlier "warning failures."

In the case of the August 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia, for example, all of the military preparations for carrying it out had been identified and described by U.S. intelligence nearly a month before operation was launched. The military force mobilization was the largest seen in the region since the end of World War II, and trucks were seen being withdrawn from civilian motor vehicle depots in the western USSR to support the combat forces. Combat aircraft from the Soviet and other East European air forces in the adjacent areas were observed with special "stripes" painted on them in what the CIA's military analysts described as a device to clearly distinguish them from the same models in the Czech air force. All of this was accompanied by "exercises and maneuvers" that provided a rehearsal for the operation.

Prior to the sudden attack on Israel by Egypt and Syria in 1973, the United States had detected both countries preparing forces on their borders with Israel. The activities appeared to be coordinated in a way that seemed to make it implausible that they were merely independent national exercises. In early October the United States learned that Moscow was evacuating most of its civilian personnel from both Egypt and Syria, while leaving military advisors in place.

In the months preceding the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, all of the military forces that were employed to launch the

2. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 13 below.

operation had been seen increasing their readiness posture. The extent of reservists called up for duty and the training levels that were detected in the ground combat units in the border regions exceeded anything that had been previously seen in the forces there. By the beginning of the second week of December, the United States had learned that several brigade-sized Soviet ground combat units had already been inserted into Afghanistan. A sizable increase in the numbers of combat and transport aircraft had also been observed at military airbases in the border regions of the USSR. By this time the ground combat divisions in the nearby regions of the USSR that earlier had been seen increasing their readiness were detected moving toward border crossing points. Airborne units in the border region were being postured in a way that would permit them to launch an attack with little or no warning.

In sum, in each of these cases the actions taken conformed to the preparations that had been seen, but in each case the judgments presented in intelligence assessments were that the actors would not undertake the actions for which they appeared to be preparing. (Judgments that, it must be noted, were easily received by policy officials who shared the same outlook.) Similarly, while the events in Iran in late 1978 that led to the fall of the shah were not a matter of interpreting a military buildup, all the signs of the revolutionary uprising were seen well in advance. At first no one seemed to believe it would actually happen, and when it was clearly emerging no one believed the shah would be ousted by it.³

All of these experiences certainly would seem to justify the basic questions raised by the congressional oversight committees: What was it in the intelligence and policy process that permitted such apparent disconnection? What allowed the officials to be caught off guard? Was it the information itself or was it what was done with the information? What could have been

3. The descriptions draw on the author's direct knowledge at the time, including participation in the preparation of the intelligence reports on the Soviet military buildups prior to the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. Descriptions of the extent of surprise on each of these events can also be seen in the following: on Czechoslovakia, "Minutes of the U.S. National Security Council Meeting (chaired by President Johnson), 20 August 1968," Document 109 in the compilation by Jaromír Navratil presented in *The Prague Spring '68* (Budapest: Central European Press, 1998); on the surprise in October 1973, see former Secretary of State Kissinger's account in *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1982), 450–67. For a description of intelligence on the shah's prospects, see Michael Ledeen and William Lewis, *Debacle: The American Failure in Iran* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 123–35; and for the surprise of Afghanistan, see former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, in *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 283–85.

done differently that would have produced a different result? Why was it not done then? What practices can be established to help avoid similar misses in the future.

This project on the events in Poland in 1980–81 was undertaken in the hope of helping to address these questions.⁴ The objective was to present a detailed examination of what was known by U.S. intelligence agencies at the time the events in Poland were unfolding, how it was reported, and what analytic judgments were provided to U.S. policy officials.

Contending with Hindsight

Reviewing past performance to learn from errors is of course not new; nor is it unique to intelligence. It is commonly done in professions ranging from military services to industrial management to medical practices. Many previous reviews have been conducted on intelligence performance, but somehow they have not succeeded in establishing practices that alleviate the kinds of pitfalls that prompted the reviews.

One of the inherent problems in such reviews, however, is their susceptibility to biases of hindsight. Experiments have demonstrated that in assessing past judgments *after* the outcomes are known, analysts, recipients of analysis, and reviewers of analytic performance will nearly always offer a skewed version of what they had concluded, what they had been told, and how foreseeable were the events. Consistently, in controlled tests, analysts overstated the accuracy of their earlier judgments and the specificity with which they had described them (a pattern that has been affirmed to this author by reactions to the descriptions presented in this study of intelligence reporting on the Polish crisis). In the same tests, recipients of the intelligence reporting understated what they had been told. And reviewers who were informed of the outcome of a hypothetical situation before conducting their review described the outcomes as much more foreseeable than did reviewers in test groups who are not informed beforehand.⁵

While it would be naïve to believe that self-interest does not play a role in this behavior pattern, studies show it is an aggravation of a tendency, not

4. The CIA has undertaken studies for the same purpose, and this study itself was done with support of CIA officers committed to enhancing the practices of their analytic profession.

5. Many studies have been published on the problems of “cognitive biases in hindsight analysis.” The understanding by at least some intelligence officers of the fundamental importance of this problem is illustrated in Richards J. Heuer Jr., “Cognitive Biases: Problems in Hindsight Analysis,” published in the CIA’s unclassified *Studies in Intelligence* 22 (summer

the cause of it. Psychological experiments have demonstrated that this hindsight bias is fundamental to the human mental processes. This cognitive process, as will be discussed in the concluding chapter, tends to cause reviews to produce recommendations that do not get to the fundamental roots of the problem. It is a cognitive factor that cannot be eliminated, but efforts can be made to contain its impact.

One means for attempting to cope with it is to tie reviews of past performance as tightly as possible to documented records of what was known by whom and when they knew it, and what was said to whom and when it was said. This is particularly difficult in studies of past intelligence performance because so much of the information was originally contained in classified documents. In part because of the historical interest in the role of intelligence in the Polish events of 1980–81, however, an unusually large number of the intelligence documents and reports produced at the time have now been released. It is thus possible to demonstrate the intelligence performance mainly on the basis the documents actually delivered to policy officials as the events were taking place. Also available are a fair number of records of meetings and actions of senior policy officials during the unfolding events, offering some insights into their perceptions of what they had been told and how they interpreted it at the time.

A large number of documents also have become available from the archives of Poland, the former USSR, and several East European countries, shedding some light on the perceptions and actions of the political authorities of those countries during the events in question. Thus, another objective of this project is to offer whatever contribution might be useful to historical perspectives by juxtaposing what was known and described at the time from U.S. intelligence sources with what is portrayed in the records and descriptions of those who directed the events. For example, the detailed information from intelligence sources showing actual, physical steps taken by Soviet military units during the periods of alleged threats of a Soviet invasion can be compared with what was being portrayed in the rhetoric at the time, and what has been asserted since then. The susceptibility to hindsight bias is not an affliction limited to western observers.

For this study, the presentation is broken into three phases, delineated by what intelligence analysts, policy officials, and the public media have described as major thresholds of the unfolding political upheaval in Poland.

1978): 21–28; also included in H. Bradford Westerfield, *Inside CIA's Private World: Declassified Articles from the Agency's Internal Journal, 1955–1992* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 333–41.

The first “peak” occurred in December 1980, a year before the internal military crackdown, when the United States launched a major diplomatic and public offensive to deter what was believed to be an impending Soviet military intervention along the lines of what had been carried out in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. The second took place in the spring of 1981, when similar concerns over what was seen as a renewed threat of Soviet military intervention generated a similar albeit somewhat less intense U.S. public offensive. The third and final phase culminated in the Polish regime’s martial crackdown in December 1981.

In what is doubtless an imperfect effort to constrain the impact of hindsight bias, the presentation attempts to impose a clear distinction between what was known and reported at the time and what is known now. For each of the three phases, the unfolding story is presented in a chronological narrative that draws on what was publicly known and reported at the time, plus the descriptions, interpretations, and predictions given in concurrent intelligence reporting—sometimes on a day-to-day basis—with the benefit of additional information obtained through secret sources. For the “open source” knowledge, the principal sources are the day-to-day press coverage and accounts by individuals who were in Poland reporting events at the time and who published their accounts within a few years or less of the December 1981 crackdown—before the release of the U.S. intelligence documents and the materials from the Polish, Soviet, and other East European records. As regards the information given to policy officials, to supplement what is shown in the declassified intelligence documents the presentation also draws on memoirs of U.S. participants on the policy level. Former DCI Robert Gates has also provided additional descriptions of disseminated intelligence for which the full, official documents have not to date become publicly available.

The information now available from the Polish, Soviet, and other East European records is introduced only *after* the narrative description of the events in each phase, to compare the assessment given in U.S. intelligence reporting at the time with what is now known. From the standpoint of evaluating the intelligence performance, this is not done for the purpose of demonstrating what was “right,” but rather to examine how the intelligence process affected perceptions, and to seek lessons that can be applied in the hope of avoiding similar shortfalls in the future. From a historical perspective, it is an attempt to enhance the picture by putting the archival materials alongside what was seen by U.S. intelligence sources at the time.

The composite listing of sources (and for the documents, where they

can be obtained) is provided at the end of the book. While it does include many books along with the listings of archival materials and journals, it is not meant to be a comprehensive bibliography of works on the subject of the Polish events of 1980–81. Rather, it is what its title denotes—a listing of “sources” for attempting to determine what information was at least available to the U.S. government at the time, what was done with that information, and the comparative perceptions and actions at the time of U.S. and non-U.S. government officials.

The Intelligence Products and Procedures

The diverse products in which intelligence is disseminated range from relatively long and highly detailed research papers designed to produce an all-source knowledge base, to estimates forecasting long-term future trends, to day-to-day journalistic style tracking of an unfolding situation and “flash” notices of fast breaking events. Examples of the larger studies would include comprehensive technical analysis of a particular state’s weapons programs, assessments of societal and economic conditions that could produce the basis for an international crisis, and long-term forecasts of the future security environment exemplified by the recently publicized “Global Trends 2015.” At the other end of the spectrum, for fast breaking events the final resort is sometimes the secure telephone.

Once an unfolding situation rises to what could be characterized as a “high visibility level,” the process tends to be dominated by what is known in the trade as “current intelligence,” the day-to-day reporting and brief analytic interpretations of the implications of unfolding developments. This flow of current intelligence is accompanied by periodic assessments pulling together the available information to present a broad look at the trends in the evolving situation, the factors shaping the events, and the alternative outcomes that could result.

It should be noted that the emergence of an international crisis-potential situation to a high visibility level rarely depends on secret intelligence. It did not require secret information, for example, to ignite concerns over the implications of the Prague Spring in 1968, the tinder-box situation in the Middle East in 1973, the explosive ingredients in Iran at the end of 1978, the unraveling of the Soviet-sponsored regime in Afghanistan in 1979, or the threat to communist authority in Poland presented by the rise of Solidarity in 1980. Recipients of the current intelligence reporting and assessments are also

seeing a concurrent stream of accounts in the media. The reporting in intelligence channels melds information that is hidden from public and diplomatic sources with that from the more open sources to identify and assess the factors that are driving events and that are likely to shape the outcome.

As potentially explosive situations grow in intensity, current intelligence products will commonly feature a daily “situation report,” integrating information from open public accounts, diplomatic reporting, and secret intelligence sources to summarize developments and provide initial, first-take interpretative analysis. The daily situation report will frequently be accompanied by a separate presentation, from one to three pages in length, offering more detail and more extensive analysis on such topics as a specific aspect of the unfolding situation, a trend or forecast suggested by developments in recent days, or activities and views of other governments. These assessments usually are listed as “special analysis.”

At the top echelon of current intelligence dissemination is the *President’s Daily Brief* (PDB), delivered six days a week (and special memoranda can be delivered on Sundays and holidays if a situation dictates).⁶ Its particular presentational format has been tailored over the years to the preferences of different presidents, but the basic reporting approach has remained essentially the same, driven by the need to balance the weight of the information with the competing demands of the President’s daily agenda. Normally, a few short, straight-to-the-bottom-line briefs (usually no more than a page in length) focusing on the most prominent current issues are packaged with no more than one somewhat longer assessment (but still no more than two pages) addressing a particular issue in more depth. The longer pieces can be employed, for example, to provide background on a currently developing situation and/or outline the outlook for the longer term. In an unfolding potential crisis situation, the PDB will usually lead off with the daily situation report, and the section reserved for longer daily articles is used to present periodic “special analysis” on the situation.

Determination of who is included in the list of daily recipients of the PDB is a presidential decision, and different presidents have adopted dif-

6. A detailed, informative description of this intelligence vehicle is presented in “Mr. Current Intelligence: An Interview with Richard Lehman,” in *Studies in Intelligence* 9 (summer 2000), Unclassified Edition, 51–63, produced by the CIA’s Center for the Study of Intelligence, available from the Government Printing Office and the Internet site www.cia.gov.csi. Mr. Lehman was the key action officer in the development of the *President’s Daily Brief* in the Kennedy administration, and continued to be involved to at least some extent up to the early days of the Reagan administration.

ferent practices. The National Security Advisor has been a de facto daily recipient since the *PDB* was started in the Kennedy administration, simply because this has been a principal channel through which intelligence products are delivered to the President. At the time of the Polish martial law crackdown, the Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs were daily recipients. Over the past twenty years the list has both expanded and contracted, depending on how the different presidents have set up their briefing processes, but in all cases it has been small and the readers have been cabinet level officials, and sometimes their principal deputies.

Obviously, for this list of recipients there is no constraint on including in the written presentations explicit information from highly sensitive sources. For security purposes, the specific identity or position of a sensitive human source, or the technical nature of some other collection system, is not described in the written texts of the *PDB*. DCIs do, however, separately provide the President and sometimes a very few cabinet-level national security officials with such information when circumstances dictate, to insure they are in position to gauge the authority and vulnerability of the source of the information upon which they are relying to formulate critical decisions. This is done through the DCI's private channels, usually an oral brief in a secure setting. In the case of the Polish military officer who was reporting to the United States on martial law, this was done for a handful of officials.

Because of the explicit use and description of highly sensitive material in the written *PDB*, each of the recipients other than the President normally receives it from a CIA officer specifically assigned to delivering it to that official. The CIA officers hand-deliver the *PDB* to the assigned recipients each day, remain with the officials while they read it, and return the copies to CIA headquarters. How the document is delivered to the presidents is again a matter of their choice. Some have received it directly from CIA officers, while others have arranged to have it conveyed to them by the National Security Advisor, after which White House security officers insure its safe handling and return to an appropriate CIA contact point. On some occasions in some administrations, and depending on the issues involved, DCIs have periodically participated directly in the presentation to the President.

This face-to-face process was established decades ago, because of the sensitivity of the *PDB* content, to minimize the number of handlers and in effect to keep the written text in sight of a CIA officer at all times. The

procedure has the additional advantage of permitting the CIA officers to alert their recipients to potentially important late breaking information received after the *PDB* itself was printed, if necessary with a caveat that full analysis of the breaking information and its implications is still in process. This process also provides a channel for delivering other special products employing highly sensitive information, and it is occasionally used by DCIs to convey personal concerns and views on unfolding situations. Perhaps most important, this process enables the top policy officials to provide immediate feedback, including any requests for clarifications, further studies, and additional products.

At the next level of current intelligence products is the *National Intelligence Daily* (*NID*). It has a much wider distribution than the *PDB*, encompassing a diverse audience of senior U.S. policy officials in various governmental departments, with diverse policy agendas, at echelons from cabinet secretary to assistant secretary and deputy assistant secretary. Thus, while the *NID* usually carries (in slightly altered format) nearly all the same briefs and articles that appear in the *PDB*, including the “situation reports” and “special analyses” on potential crisis situations such as that of Poland in 1980–81, it also includes briefs on a number of additional subjects. It also can and frequently does include more than one longer, more in-depth “special analysis.”

The *NID* does not, however, include the same kind of explicit reporting from highly sensitive sources—such as from the Polish officer reporting on the martial law plans—that is given in the *PDB*. This is driven by two fundamental considerations.

The first is that the nature of the information usually is such that any disclosure, however inadvertent, that the United States was in possession of it would by itself carry a high risk of exposing its source. It usually includes information to which access is restricted even in the entity from which it originates, and thus discovery that the United States had the information would quickly result in a search for the leak by the entity of concern. This search could usually be targeted at a limited list of individuals known to have access to the information, and to specific communication channels through which the information is handled.

The second factor constraining the specificity of information in the *NID* is the substantially wider distribution it is given compared to the *PDB*. Accusations of secrecy obsession are frequently levied on intelligence agencies, and even professional intelligence officers will not deny that sometimes the secrecy restrictions are carried to extremes. Nonetheless, it is a

simple fact that the wider the dissemination of a parcel of information the greater the risk of its inadvertent disclosure.

This does *not* prevent the information from going to selected key officials—usually a small number—who are intimately involved in the policies dealing with the events at hand, have a clear need for the information, and do not receive it through the *PDB*. It does mean that the intelligence must be delivered to them through special channels devoted specifically to handling such sensitive information. The more special the information, the more vulnerable the source. And the more vulnerable the source, the tighter the circle of recipients of the information obtained.

The restrictions on dissemination of information from such special sources also do *not* prevent the analysts from employing their knowledge of it to interpret the wider spectrum of evidence from all other sources. The idea of an ominous picture being presented in the *PDB* while a complacent portrayal of the same events is being given in the *NID* is not a practical reality, absent a conscious decision by the top policy officials themselves to conceal even the prospect of a looming crisis.

The title “*National*” *Intelligence Daily* is intended to signify that the analytic judgments it contains are not just those of the CIA but of the other intelligence agencies as well—particularly the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research (DIA and INR, respectively). In practice, as the other agencies will often charge, the content is dominated by the views of CIA analysts. This is in large measure because in any document the drafters and printers dominate the content, and CIA analysts, with extremely rare exception, draft the content. Drafts of the articles are submitted to the other agencies for comment and concurrence, and when there is a significant dissenting view it is inserted along with the name of the dissenting agency. The vigor with which the other agencies exercise this prerogative has varied over time, depending on the preferences of the senior officers of those agencies.

At the same time, the DIA and INR disseminate their own daily intelligence publications, which include their own descriptions and assessments of the top priority issues that appear in the *NID*. Both agencies design the contents of their daily intelligence publications primarily for their own senior departmental officials (i.e., Department of Defense and senior military staffs, and the State Department officers and U.S. embassies). These same publications, however, are also delivered to officials in most other national security agencies.

For information from special sensitive sources, the same restrictions apply as were described above for products of CIA analysts. The infor-

mation is limited to those senior officers and analysts who have a clear need for it to carry out their substantive responsibilities, and the same restrictions apply to the DIA and INR current intelligence products as apply to the *NID*. The heads of these agencies are responsible for providing the secure channel for conveying the separate, special reports of information from sensitive sources to those senior officials in their respective departments who are authorized to receive it, and who do not get it through the *PDB*.

The potential “drowning” effect of this “flood” of current intelligence to senior policy officials who have a crowded daily menu under any circumstances was a principal consideration in the creation of the *Alert Memorandum*. It was designed to provide a special klaxon for warning of a looming crisis or of potential dramatic changes in an existing crisis situation. The prescribed procedure for producing an *Alert Memorandum* is through an interagency task group. The product is sent “hot off the press” to the President and other cabinet-level officials, usually with a covering note from the DCI. Source protection requirements permitting, it is usually presented the next day in the *NID*.

Because of its warning function, however, procedures for producing an *Alert Memorandum* are just as likely to be ad hoc, dictated by time, the level of potential threat, the source of the information, and communication channels. At one extreme, for example, if the “alert” is the specific and exclusive result of information from a sensitive vulnerable source, with a short lead time, it could take the form of a telephone message, followed up by a tightly controlled written version with additional detail. This would be initially delivered to the top national security cabinet officials, followed up by delivery to a select group of policy officials at the next echelon. More common is a situation in which a series of events is seen approaching a boiling point, usually as a result of recent additions of fuel to what had been a gradually rising flame. Whatever its genesis, the guiding principle for an *Alert Memorandum* is speed, a prominently flagged message, and a special effort to get the attention of the top policy leadership, beginning with the President.

At the other end of the spectrum are the periodic longer assessments that are specifically designed as a step back from the flow of current intelligence, to summarize developments and the evidential train, examine the factors driving the situation, and forecast the outlook. These include assessments produced by individual intelligence agencies, and also interagency collaborative products under the title of *National Intelligence Estimate*

(*NIE*).⁷ The *NIEs* are designed to give special attention to forecasting developments and potential outcomes, and individual agencies are officially encouraged to record and articulate alternative views. That said, one of the biggest criticisms levied at *NIEs* over their long history has been a tendency to give priority to consensus, resulting in diluted language and a lack of sharp distinction between competing forecasts.

All of these longer assessments, whether individual agency products or *NIEs*, normally are targeted at the policy officials directly engaged with the issues at hand. This is a more narrowly defined audience than that of the *NID*, but usually still significantly larger than the list of officials formally authorized to receive information explicitly tied to highly sensitive sources. Therefore, the common practice is to exclude from the *NIE* text specific descriptions of information from such sources.

Nonetheless, the *NIE* assessments are virtually always drafted by analysts who are fully cleared for and aware of all information from all sources, as are the senior intelligence officers who review the product for dissemination. Usually, the analysts are part of the same cadre that draft and/or review all of the products by the various individual intelligence agencies addressing the specific situation at issue—whether daily reports and special analyses for the current intelligence products or the longer in-depth assessments. These same analysts take part in their agency’s review of draft texts of *NIEs*, and as is the case for current intelligence products, they can certainly employ their knowledge of the sensitive source information to interpret the overall body of evidence from other sources. The senior intelligence officials who sign off on their agency’s concurrence or dissent from the judgments of an *NIE* normally will have already received any sensitive information that bears on the judgments but that was excluded from the distributed text for source protection reasons.

In sum, while allowing for individual instances of malperformance, there appears no factor in the fundamental intelligence production and dissemination procedures themselves that should cause a “bottleneck” as has sometimes been suggested. The functioning of this process, however, is dependent on the starting point—the collection of the information, how it is interpreted, and how it is presented. Mainly, it is dependent on the analysis and

7. Depending on the depth and scope of the subject matter addressed in these interagency collaborative products, or the circumstances under which they are prepared, the titles can vary from “Interagency Intelligence Memorandum” to “Special National Intelligence Estimate.” They nonetheless carry the same kind of interagency “Intelligence Community” imprimatur as the *NIEs*.

the analytic practices. Rather than a bottleneck, the problem appears to be more aptly described as a breakdown—somewhere between the acquisition of the information and the completion of the product that carries the intelligence to the policy officials.

The following study was able to draw on all of the reports on Poland that appeared in the *NID* from 1 July 1980 through the imposition of martial law in December 1981, which were declassified and released by the CIA in August 1999. Also available are many of the longer assessments and *NIEs* produced at the time. In the declassification of these documents, some passages have of course been deleted for security reasons, to protect the sources and methods. In virtually all cases, however, the judgments given from the analysis and conveyed to the policy officials remain as originally written. Some of the information on military deployments has been deleted, but the author was able to get release of general descriptions that show what was known of the size and timing of force movements. Similarly, while none of the *PDBs* and special documents disseminated through this *PDB* channel have been released, descriptions of some of the basic information and judgments conveyed through this channel have been cleared for release.

This draws in part on the fact that the author was assigned to cover Soviet and East European military activities in and around Poland from the beginning of the confrontation at Gdansk in August 1980 until 1 May 1981. Beginning in October 1981 until well after martial law the author was a manager of the office that distributed the *NID*, and was also one of the individuals assigned to delivering the *PDB* to certain cabinet level officials. While this did not involve producing the analytic substance of daily reporting, it did mean that the author was fully familiar with the contents of each daily edition. The descriptions given in the text that follows have all been reviewed by the CIA for inclusion in this study. The accuracy of those descriptions, however, is the author's responsibility.

Thus the author's vulnerability to cognitive bias in hindsight must be recorded. It is in part to cope with this bias that the author has sought to the extent possible to show what was reported to policy officials in specifically identified intelligence products.

All of the declassified documents referenced in this study are on deposit at the National Security Archive (a nongovernmental organization) at the Gelman Library, Suite 701, 2130 H Street NW, Washington, D.C.

PART I: The Rise of Solidarity and
the Threat of Soviet Intervention,
July-December 1980

Chapter 1: The Burgeoning Confrontation

On 1 July 1980 the Polish government, without advance notice, announced that it had raised prices of food and other consumer goods. Meat prices were increased by as much as 60 to 90 percent. The next day, strikes for compensatory wage increases erupted throughout Poland. To Western observers these events appeared to put the Polish workers and ruling powers on the same kind of collision course they had gone through twice in the last decade.¹

In December 1970 a government-directed increase of more than 35 percent in staple food prices had been immediately followed by widespread worker protests. The regime's response at that time had been a crackdown by police and soldiers that resulted in the shooting of workers in front of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. The head of the Polish Communist Party (Polish United Workers Party—Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza or PZPR) who ordered the crackdown, Wladyslaw Gomulka, was replaced less than a week later by Edward Gierek. These events have been subsequently viewed as perhaps the most important precursor to the development of Solidarity.²

In June 1976 unexpected food price hikes were again met with strikes that quickly spread across the country. Public demonstrations by workers included the burning of the Polish party headquarters in Radom, south of Warsaw. The breadth of opposition ultimately compelled the regime to back down

1. Extensive descriptions of the political, social, and economic dynamics shaping the internal situation in Poland in 1980–81 include Nicholas G. Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81: Solidarity vs. the Party* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1985); Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August* (New York: Penguin, 1982); Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985). All three authors were in Poland and had direct observation of the events. Andrews was deputy chief of the U.S. Mission. Garton Ash and Ascherson were covering events for European media. For the reader with the time and dedication, extensive details can be obtained by reviewing the major U.S. press publications of summer and fall 1980.

2. Lech Walesa, *A Way of Hope* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1987), 10. See also Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 10–13.

from price hikes, but police and security forces imposed harsh retaliatory measures on the striking workers, particularly in Radom and at the Ursus tractor factory near Warsaw.

The violence experienced in these earlier episodes had a significant impact on the calculations and maneuvers of participants on all sides of the struggle. Labor groups began to seek greater coordination and centralization to strengthen their hand in confronting the party. A group of dissident intellectuals formed the Committee for Defense of Workers (KOR—Komitet Obrony Robotnikow) for the specific purpose of supporting the labor groups. It established an advisory channel on political strategy and tactics between the workers and intelligentsia that would prove to be influential in the development and shaping of Solidarity, and would ultimately include people who were members of Solidarity. Other groups that sprang up included the Movement in Defense of Human and Citizen Rights (ROPCiO—Ruch Obrony Praw Czlowieka i Obywatela), whose purpose was monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Final Act, and the Young Poland Movement (RMP—Ruch Mlodzej Polski).³

For senior Polish political and military officials the experiences of 1970 and 1976 presented a vivid demonstration of the volatility and potential costs of using force to bring popular uprisings under control. The perception of Polish attitudes toward the use of force would also become an important variable in the calculations of Western governments and the Soviet leadership.

The July 1980 announcement of price increases occurred when tensions between opposition groups and the government had already been festering. Two months earlier some members of the ROPCiO and RMP had been arrested. Their organizations responded with a campaign of leaflets demanding, among other things, recognition of the rights of Polish citizens, and a major economic reconfiguration aimed at ending price increases and inflation. Other groups such as the KOR threw their support to these demands. (One participant in these campaigns was an electrician named Lech Walesa, who had been fired from the Lenin Shipyard at Gdansk in 1976 for making a confrontational speech at a meeting there of the government sanctioned union.⁴ He would shortly begin a trek to an enduring place in the history of Poland.)

As the strikes were breaking out in July, the political evolution that had

3. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 17–25; and Walesa, *Way of Hope*, 10.

4. Walesa, *Way of Hope*, 104–5.

taken place in the labor movement quickly became evident when the KOR declared it would use its resources to keep the public informed on the progress of the strikes. This produced an alternate news service that would prove to be of considerable help to the strikers in countering regime efforts to splinter their unity by cutting separate deals with workers at different enterprises. It also helped keep the Western press informed of ongoing events.

In contrast to the swift imposition of force in 1970, this time the Polish authorities sought some degree of appeasement. They initially had some success, with strikers at individual enterprises agreeing to return to work after being offered wage hikes of 10 to 15 percent. But in what would be a continuing pattern, as soon as a strike at one factory was settled another began somewhere else. This contagion appears to have been at least partly the result of the KOR communication effort, with increasing numbers of workers resorting to strikes after learning that strikers elsewhere had obtained some concessions.

By mid-July the strikes had expanded to Lublin, the site in western Poland of a major junction of rail links between the Soviet Union and East Germany. The initial strike there was at a truck factory, where workers submitted some thirty-five demands to the government. Many of their demands involved issues beyond prices and wages, such as press freedom and curbs on privileges of security organizations. As soon as the Lublin truck workers strike was settled by offers of wage increases, the local railway workers launched a strike that shut down the rail lines. The prominence of this development was reflected in the fact that a deputy prime minister, Mieczyslaw Jagielski, was dispatched to negotiate a solution with the strikers.⁵

On 20 July the U.S. Intelligence Community prepared an *Alert Memorandum* warning that the labor disputes in Poland could ultimately lead to military suppression.⁶ It said agreements that had appeared to settle some disputes were coming unglued, and the increased tensions throughout the country could degenerate into a violent confrontation between the workers and the regime. The *Alert Memorandum* said that while Soviet leaders would

5. Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 25-26, and Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 33-34.

6. "Poland," *Alert Memorandum*, declassified *National Intelligence Daily* (hereafter cited as decl. *NID*), 21 July 1980. *Alert Memoranda* appeared in the *NID* a day after they were sent to the President. Declassified *NID* articles on the Polish crisis were released by the CIA in August 1999 and are on deposit at the National Security Archive (Gelman Library, Suite 701, 2130 H St. NW, Washington D.C., phone 202-994-7000). *NID* articles were almost always drafted by CIA analysts, but were required to be coordinated with analysts from other intelligence agencies. Thus, while the reporting in the *NID* is usually described as reporting of the "Intelligence Community," it is mainly the view of CIA analysts.

be reluctant to become directly involved in a military crackdown, Moscow would intervene as a last resort if the Polish leadership proved incapable of restoring order in a situation that appeared to be deteriorating into violent confrontation. The *Memorandum* also pointed out that no unusual activity had as yet been observed in Soviet military units based in or near Poland.

At about the same time that this intelligence assessment was being disseminated, a compromise settlement was being reached in the negotiations between Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski and the rail strikers at Lublin. The strikers agreed on 20 July to return to work. The Lublin strikes had lasted nine days, during four of which the entire town had been paralyzed.

Less than a month later, on 14 August, a strike began at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk—the site of the December 1970 tragedy. Until that day, the workers at this enterprise had not joined the widespread strikes in reaction to the July announcement of price hikes. The fuse that set them off was the firing of Anna Walentynowicz, a popular employee of long standing at the shipyard, on blatantly bogus charges in connection with her efforts to promote a memorial to the protesters killed in the strikes of 1970. The next two weeks would produce a fundamental evolution in the nature of the labor movement and popular opposition in Poland.

Solidarity Evolves as a Political Force

Many of the specific factors that shaped the developments at Gdansk in August 1980 were not clear at the time. Nonetheless, what did seem clear even then was that what was unfolding had the potential for becoming a historical watershed.

On the first day of the strike, Lech Walesa vaulted into a leading role in the events that were beginning to unfold. The preceding December he had made an impromptu appearance at a ceremony held at the Lenin Shipyard to commemorate the 1970 tragedy, delivering a speech that drew rousing applause from the crowd (and resulted in his dismissal from his latest job). On 14 August 1980 his timely intervention and delivery of another rousing speech was instrumental in causing a protest demonstration to quickly become an occupation of the factory.⁷

7. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 39. Mr. Garton Ash arrived on the scene on 18 August, covering events for the *London Times*. His accounts of events throughout 1980–81 in Poland also appeared in *Der Spiegel* in Germany and *The Spectator* in England. His chapter “Inside the Lenin Shipyard” draws on his presence there during the strikes.

Within a few days the confrontation took on a new dimension with the creation of an Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS—Miedzyakladadowy Komitet Strajkowy). This was composed of two representatives from each of the diverse striking enterprises in Gdańsk and the nearby cities of Gdynia and Sopot. Its meeting site was a large hall at the Lenin Shipyard. On the weekend of 16–17 August, the MKS issued a communiqué describing its purpose as the coordination of the actions and demands of workers at all striking enterprises. The communiqué said that a common list of demands would be drawn up, and that all workers represented by the MKS would remain on strike until all demands on the list were settled.⁸

By Monday morning, 18 August, the MKS had agreed upon and released a list of twenty-one demands. At the top of this list were:

- Free trade unions that would be independent of the party and employers, in accordance with the Convention of the International Labor Organization.
- A guaranteed right to strike, and guarantees of security for strikers and those who supported them.
- Regulation of censorship through guarantees for free speech and protection of printing and distribution of independent publications.⁹
- Restoration of jobs and rights for those who had been dismissed from their jobs or expelled from universities in the 1970 and 1976 crackdowns, the release of political prisoners, and legal prohibition of reprisals for political beliefs.
- Access to the mass media for publication of worker views and demands.
- Provision of full and accurate information on the economy, and opportunities for all social groups to participate in discussions of economic reforms.

These were not simply demands tied to specific work-related concerns of the specific strikers represented by the MKS. They addressed political, social, and economic issues central to the entire citizenry of Poland—what

8. These developments and the formulation of the demands that resulted are described from different vantage points in Walesa, *Way of Hope*, 128, 131–32; Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 28–29; and Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 41–43.

9. The union would later be charged by the Soviet Politburo with seeking to “abolish” censorship. Some Western writers also described this as one of the workers’ demands, and reportedly some MKS representatives did press for including such a provision. MKS leaders, however, recognized the explosive potential of such a demand, and the wording of their final list only sought legal restrictions.

one European scholar has described as a “civil crusade.”¹⁰ Issues like wages, strike compensation, work and holiday regulation (including the demand that Saturdays be work-free), and other worker benefits appeared further down on the list of demands. Even some of these demands were framed to affect a much broader segment of Polish society than the workers at the striking facilities. They included, for example, provisions dealing with food pricing and distribution, and demands for reining in the preferential treatment and privileges of party officials and security forces. The provisions addressed the complaints of all Poles who were not the beneficiaries of party *nomenklatura* privileges. Many of the demands articulated long-standing objectives of the KOR.

U.S. intelligence descriptions of these developments said that while the Polish regime was willing to offer concessions on purely economic issues like wages, prices, and working conditions if this would defuse the crisis, the leadership would not give ground on the demands that were seen as crossing into the political sphere. Free trade unions in particular were “politically unacceptable,” according to intelligence analysts.¹¹

Some three hundred enterprises in the Gdansk region signed up with the MKS within the first week of its existence. Workers on strike at factories in Gdansk alone numbered about 120,000. Strikes also had spread to every major Polish industrial center. In some of the larger ones, such as Szczecin, near the East German border, Elblag, southeast of Gdansk, and later at Wroclaw in southwestern Poland, the workers copied the Gdansk idea by forming their own MKSs. On 23 August, the Gdansk MKS distributed the first issue of its strike bulletin under the title “Solidarity” (Solidarność).¹²

The regime initially refused as “a matter of political principle” to negotiate with the unified MKS, continuing instead to pursue a “divide and con-

10. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 74. For a similar outlook written at the time, see “Strikers in Poland Defy Gierek Appeal,” *NYT*, 20 August 1980, A1; and “Warsaw Arrests Main Dissidents,” *NYT*, 21 August, A1. These articles were written by John Darnton, who was also on the scene in Poland covering events for the *New York Times*. He has not written a book on the subject, but his articles at the time were particularly insightful. They look all the better with the test of time, and read in sequence they equal, in this author’s view, the books of his colleagues.

11. “Poland: Labor Unrest,” decl. *NID*, 16 August 1980; “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 18 August 1980; and “Poland: Prospects for Confrontation,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 22 August 1980.

12. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NIDs*, 21 and 23 August 1980; Joseph Held, *Dictionary of East European History Since 1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), 304, 338; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 49–50; Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 34.

quer” strategy aimed at getting separate agreements with workers at different plants—trying, in effect, to buy them off with nominal wage increases. This scheme soon came to be seen as exacerbating the standoff. It had been these government tactics that contributed to the creation of the MKS. On the same day that the first Solidarity bulletin was issued, Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski, who had again been put in charge of government negotiations with the strikers, began dealing directly with the Gdańsk MKS. This *de facto* official recognition of the authority of the MKS to represent the collective unions represented the achievement of a new dimension for the labor movement.¹³

A day later, the head of the government, Prime Minister Edward Babiuch, was offered up as a scapegoat for the failure of the economic policies. Josef Pinkowski was named as his successor.

There also was a major overhaul in the top organs of the party. Several individuals viewed as impeding constructive dealings with the workers were dropped from the Central Committee and Politburo, even though most of them were also allies of First Secretary Gierek. The individuals who were promoted included at least two of Gierek’s strongest critics. One of them—Stefan Olszowski—had challenged him some years earlier and had since then been exiled as ambassador to East Germany. Olszowski was described by U.S. intelligence analysts as a candidate to replace the politically weakened Gierek, and as a “forceful supporter of far-reaching economic reforms,” a view that contrasted with that of many outside observers. Intelligence analysts described the personnel changes as having shifted the balance within the regime toward “the moderate and pragmatic end of the political spectrum,” but said that this offered no guarantees of resolving the crisis.¹⁴

On 31 August, Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski and Walesa signed what became known as the Gdańsk agreement. By any standard it was a landmark event.¹⁵ On its face it essentially committed the government to all

13. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NIDs*, 21, 22, and 23 August 1980; Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 32.

14. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 25 August 1980. See also Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 55; Michael Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 49. Mr. Dobbs also was in Poland at the time covering events for the *Washington Post*. For Babiuch this was the end of the “what goes around comes around” cycle. He had been appointed Prime Minister under exactly the same circumstances in February 1980, to replace Piotr Jaroszewicz when it had been the latter’s turn to be offered up as a scapegoat for a failing economy.

15. “Excerpts from Polish Agreement,” *NYT*, 31 August 1980, 1. The full text of the Gdańsk Agreement is in Ascherson, *Polish August*, 288–99.

twenty-one of the demands put forward by the MKS. Many of these provisions, such as the right to establish independent unions, the right to strike without reprisals, and the right of “freedom of expression,” were without precedent in member states of the Soviet bloc. The government had already reached a settlement with strikers in Szczecin a day earlier, and three days after the signing at Gdansk an agreement was reached ending strikes at Jastrzebie in the Silesian coalfields.

The widespread perception of the Gdansk agreement’s historical dimensions was reflected in a *New York Times* article the following day that said “the idea of independent unions and the right to strike [in a Soviet bloc country] is so revolutionary that it is impossible to say where it will lead.”¹⁶ Intelligence assessments said the Gdansk agreement would “usher in a period of political turmoil that could last for several years.” Analysts pointed out that allowing free and independent trade unions would “differentiate Poland even more from its Warsaw Pact allies, giving it an independent workers’ lobby to go along with an independent church and independent farmers, resulting in Poland’s movement “toward a more liberal and open society.” One intelligence assessment said that “so far, the workers are clearly the winners. . . . They have wrung from the regime a settlement that offers them a chance to institutionalize their right to represent the industrial work force of Poland over the longer term.”¹⁷

Less than a week later, the head of the Polish party was replaced. On the afternoon of 5 September, a public announcement stated that PZPR First Secretary Gierek was ill and in the hospital. A meeting of the party’s Central Committee took place that evening, and the next day the public was informed that Stanislaw Kania had been named as the new first secretary. Other personnel changes in the Politburo, Central Committee, and Secretariat of the party were also announced. The unmistakable signal was that this was the party’s reaction to a failed leadership that had permitted the situation to reach the point where the party’s authority clearly was in jeopardy. In hindsight, Gierek’s ouster probably had begun to be set up by the Central Committee shakeup two weeks earlier.

The *NID* reported that there was a strong possibility Moscow had a hand not only in Gierek’s ouster, but also in the selection of Kania as his successor. Referring to earlier intelligence reports that had posited Olszowski

16. “Polish Strikers Agree to End Walkout After Government Yields on Final Key Demand,” *NYT*, 1 September 1980, A1.

17. “Poland: Settlement Implications,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 2 September 1980; “Poland: Post Strike Prospects,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 5 September 1980.

as the strongest candidate to replace Gierek, the *NID* assessment said he probably had been passed over because of his “mounting enthusiasm for free trade unions.” (Again, a distinct difference from the views of other observers.) Kania had a long tenure as a party apparachik, including ten years in the Secretariat position overseeing military and security affairs. Intelligence reports pointed out that he had close contacts with the KGB and with Soviet leaders in general, and intelligence analysts suggested that he had been chosen as party leader in the belief that he would take a strong line toward restoring public order. Western journalists offered similar assessments.

The intelligence assessments also said, however, that despite Kania’s “hard-line reputation” he was likely to show considerable flexibility, and that the party leadership continued to be “largely moderate and pragmatic.”¹⁸ As later events would show, neither Kania nor Olszowski would quite live up to the images intelligence analysts initially built of them. In Kania’s case, the same seems to have been true of Moscow’s hopes for him.

While this was taking place, the Polish Sejm (parliament) went through the formality of voting to confirm Josef Pinkowski as prime minister. Thus within less than two weeks of the beginning of the regime’s negotiations with the new MKS or Interfactory Strike Committee, Poland had both a new prime minister and a new head of the Communist Party.

The next few weeks offered ample demonstration of the challenge to party supremacy that had been opened by the Gdansk Agreement. On 17

18. “Poland: New Party Chief,” decl. *NID*, 6 September 1980; “Poland: Implications of Change in Party Leadership,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 8 September 1980; “Gierek Ousted From Post,” *NYT*, 6 September 1980, 1. It should be noted that contrary to the view of CIA analysts at this time, most observers on the scene regarded Olszowski as a hard liner. For example, Ascherson, *Polish August*, 180–85, suggests that Moscow was in the process of engineering the accession of Olszowski or some other “hard-liner” to head the party. Ascherson has said that Gierek’s sudden heart attack caused the change to take place before the Soviets could get the support lined up for their preferred candidate. According to his understanding at the time, Moscow had to settle for a more “moderate” Kania. Records now available of Soviet leadership discussions of the Polish leaders, however, tend to cast doubt on this theory, but they do confirm Moscow’s view of Olszowski as equally tough. In discussions at the time, the Soviet leaders described Kania as one of the “best available,” and while appreciative of Olszowski’s hard line, they expressed some concern over the prospect that he would provoke rather than manage the confrontations. See the record of the CPSU CC Politburo meeting of 29 October 1980 in Mark Kramer, *Top Secret Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis, 1980–81*, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Special Working Paper No. 1, April 1999 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center). Mr. Kramer is Director of the Harvard Davis Center Project on Cold War Studies. Olszowski’s conduct during the unfolding confrontation would eventually bring intelligence analysts to see him in this same light.

September, some thirty-five newly-formed independent Polish trade unions declared their intent to register as a unified Independent Self-Governing Trade Union (NSZZ—Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zwodowy), under the name Solidarity (Solidarność). Delegates at the founding meeting announced that some 3 million workers from 3,500 factories had joined or had applied to join Solidarity. To head this national union confederation, a National Coordinating Commission (KKP—Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza) was set up with Walesa as its chairman. “Interfactory Founding Committees” (MKZ—Miedzyzakładowa Komisja Założycielski) were set up on the regional level, and “Factory Commissions” (KZ—Komisja Zakładowa) were set up at the individual enterprises. By 24 September, the National Coordinating Commission had approved language for Solidarity’s founding statutes and submitted them to the Warsaw Provincial Court for formal registration as an independent trade union. This would set the stage for the next round of confrontation.¹⁹

The Washington Perspective: Threat of Soviet Intervention

In the last week of August, a few days before the Gdansk Agreement was announced, President Carter sent a letter to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, and President Giscard d’Estaing proposing that the four Western leaders share views and coordinate actions with regard to ongoing events in Poland. He said that “what is going on in Poland could precipitate far reaching consequences for East-West relations and even for the future of the Soviet bloc itself.”

The President also stressed that “the matter is for the Poles themselves to resolve, without any foreign interference,” and that “We must of course be concerned about possible Soviet reactions.” The letter concluded with the recommendation that economic aid from the West be “designed to encourage the Poles to undertake a more fundamental and systemic reform of their economic system.” The dispatch of this letter prompted the U.S. State Department to begin consultations with allied governments on contingency plans for the possibility of Soviet military intervention.²⁰

19. The initial intelligence perspective on this event is in “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 19 September 1980. For additional details, see Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 286, and Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 74–75.

20. Declassified State Department Cable 232803, NODIS, 1 September 1980, to U.S.

Shortly after this letter was sent, but still before the agreement at Gdansk, the CIA disseminated a special analysis that said Moscow “could not . . . tolerate genuinely independent trade unions or legal restrictions on censorship” in a Soviet bloc state. This intelligence assessment correctly forecast that the Soviets would exert pressure on Gierek to adopt a tougher stance, and that if this failed to produce results they would seek his removal. It said Moscow probably would pose the specter of Soviet military intervention as a means of driving home to the Poles the need to impose their own solution, including if necessary the use of force. The intelligence assessment also said, however, that while the enormous costs of military intervention would lead the Soviets to exhaust all possibilities for alternative solutions, they would nonetheless be willing to accept those costs if they concluded that the communist system in Poland was at risk of collapsing.²¹

The possibility that the events in Poland could result in Soviet military intervention had been a concern for U.S. officials virtually from the beginning of the strike outbreak in July, as was reflected in the 20 July Intelligence Community *Alert Memorandum*. Intelligence assessments gave little chance to the prospects of the Polish regime successfully carrying out its own forceful crackdown, even if it was willing to try, which most analysts doubted. Although Polish police units and troops of the Ministry of Internal Security had been moved from Warsaw to the Gdansk area within a week of the outbreak of the shipyard strike, intelligence analysts said any attempt to use force—especially military troops—carried the risk that the units might not perform reliably. Even before the Gdansk agreement, intelligence analysts had concluded that the rising civil opposition had substantially eroded the

embassies in London, Bonn, and Paris, in *Poland, 1980–82: Internal Crisis, International Dimensions; A Compendium of Declassified Documents and Chronology of Events* (Washington, D.C.: National Security Archive, 1997), compiled by Malcom Byrne, Pavel Machcewicz, and Christian Osterman, for a conference held at Jachranka, Poland in November 1997. Hereafter referred to as *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*. This State Department cable provided U.S. embassies the text of the President’s private letter, which it said had been sent on 27 August, and alerted the embassies that “indications that the letter has been sent are already appearing in the press.” The letter’s contents were in fact described in a *New York Times* article two days later (“Carter Urges Allies to Assist Poles,” *NYT*, 3 September 1980, A1). The description of the letter having prompted planning for the contingency of a Soviet intervention is in Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of a National Security Advisor, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1983), 464. Brzezinski describes the letter as having been written on 25 August, but the difference in dates may simply be a matter of when it was prepared versus when it was transmitted or delivered to the addressees.

21. “Poland: Implications of the Labor Crisis,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 28 August 1980.

reliability of the police and other security forces, and that an attempt to use force could result in violence quickly spreading beyond the regime's control. It was this prospect that, at least in the formative stages of the Solidarity movement, was central to the concerns for Soviet military intervention.²²

After the signing of the Gdansk Agreement—which included the provisions on independent trade unions and legal restrictions of censorship that intelligence analysts had already said Moscow could not accept—the CIA again raised the issue of potential Soviet military intervention. A special analysis written a day before the change in party leadership concluded that the longer-term prospects essentially came down to:

- Continued aggressive strikes by the workers against an increasingly enfeebled regime, leading inevitably to Soviet intervention, or
- Some accommodation for a balance of power worked out by a union and regime motivated to a substantial degree by explicit recognition of the danger of Soviet military intervention as the alternative.²³

Even before this intelligence assessment was disseminated, Presidential National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski had reached his own conclusions regarding the potential impact of the Gdansk agreement on the authority of the Polish party. He asked Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner for an updated Intelligence Community assessment of the prospects for Soviet military intervention.²⁴

For the Intelligence Community, this task went beyond examining the factors that might cause the Soviets to intervene, and calculating the odds that they would do so. That was a function that could be done—and was being done daily—by policy makers and outside experts on the basis of diplomatic reporting and public sources of information from observers on the scene. (Brzezinski himself would have been at the top of the list of those doing such analysis.) The specific extra dimensions expected from the Intelligence Community included detailed calculations of the specific steps that would be involved in preparations for such measures, and the detection and assessment of actions revealing Soviet preparations to actually carry them out.

22. "Poland," *Alert Memorandum*, decl. *NID*, 21 July 1980; "Poland: Prospects for Confrontation," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 22 August 1980; "Poland: Implications of the Labor Crisis," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 28 August 1980.

23. "Poland: Post Strike Prospects," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 5 September 1980.

24. Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 163.

During the first half of September, the Intelligence Community began to detect and report Soviet military activity in the western parts of the USSR that seemed unusual compared to past patterns. Analysts cautioned that the evidence was relatively sparse and that they could not rule out the possibility that what was being observed was part of normal training plans. They pointed out, however, that the activities taking place included the exercising of civilian vehicles with heretofore low-strength ground force divisions, a sign that the Soviets were at least practicing mobilization. The CIA reported that there was no evidence that mobilization was as yet actually taking place, and that the activities observed to date did not reflect indications of imminent military operations against Poland. The intelligence reports also pointed out that the activities did suggest the Soviets were taking some preparatory measures with the expectation that use of military force may be necessary. Measures that seemed related to increasing readiness continued in selected Soviet military units throughout the month of September.²⁵

This activity was cited in an updated *Alert Memorandum* Turner sent to the President and other senior officials on 19 September, two days after Solidarity announced its intent to register as an independent trade union. The DCI attached his own cover note to this *Memorandum*, saying that “Soviet military activity detected in the last few days leads me to believe that the Soviet leadership is preparing to intervene militarily if the Polish situation is not brought under control in a manner satisfactory to Moscow.” The text of the *Alert Memorandum* said that while Soviet military preparations so far remained well short of the requirements for a large-scale military intervention, they had increased their readiness to mobilize such a force. The *Memorandum* said Moscow would likely give Kania more time to establish control, but “if the Soviets conclude the [Polish] regime is losing control of the country or that Poland’s loyalty to the Warsaw Pact is in question, they will intervene militarily.” According to Gates, this alarming message was accompanied by a cautionary note pointing out that efforts

25. “USSR-Poland: Military Activity,” decl. *NID*, 13 September 1980; “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 17 September 1980; “USSR-Poland: Moscow’s Reaction to Crisis,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 18 September 1980; “Poland,” decl. *NID*, 25 September 1980. As exemplified in the few snippets in these four documents, most of the details of what was seen regarding Soviet military activities related to the Polish situation prior to 1 December 1980 have been excluded from the declassified intelligence documents. The author’s descriptions of such intelligence assessments presented in this paper, however, have been reviewed and approved for public release by the CIA. The CIA does not take responsibility for the accuracy of those descriptions; that burden rests with the author.

to acquire detailed information on Soviet military developments were being impeded by cloud cover over much of the western USSR.²⁶

This intelligence assessment was specifically cited in (and included as an attachment to) a White House memorandum setting up a meeting of the senior U.S. national security officials four days later. This meeting was chaired by Brzezinski, and included the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of State, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the DCI. Its stated purpose was to “review the current intelligence on Soviet troop movements and the state of our contingency planning” for Soviet military intervention.²⁷

According to the official White House summary of the meeting, the DCI reaffirmed the intelligence analysts’ judgment that Moscow had not yet reached a decision on an invasion of Poland, but he also pointed out that the Soviet military was taking steps similar to what had been seen before the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. He said the Intelligence Community estimated that a Soviet military force for intervention in Poland would include at least thirty divisions—more than twice the number in the Polish Army. This estimate was based on analysts’ calculation that:

- The Soviets would be uncertain about reactions of Polish armed forces, which had thirteen ground divisions plus one airborne division, with the airborne division and eight of the ground divisions kept at a fairly high manning level. The Poles also had sizable internal defense militia.
- The Soviet General Staff was very conservative and would seek a force of sufficiently overwhelming size to constitute a deterrent to organized opposition and provide the power to quickly suppress any resistance that did occur—as they had done in the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia.

Brzezinski and the other meeting participants agreed that the Poles would fight any Soviet military intervention, although they were uncertain as to how organized the resistance would be.²⁸

26. “Polish Trends and Soviet Perceptions and Reactions,” *Alert Memorandum*, decl. *NID*, 20 September 1980. Turner’s note and the admonition on cloud cover are described in Gates, *From the Shadows*, 163.

27. Memorandum from Steve Larrabee to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 22 September 1980; “SCC on Poland, Tuesday, September 23, 10:45,” in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*. This declassified version of Larrabee’s memo does not include the CIA attachments, but it does list the DCI’s memo as an attachment to the original.

28. “Summary of Conclusions, Special Coordinating Committee meeting, Tuesday, September 23, 1980,” *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

DCI Turner said U.S. intelligence resources would be able to detect the readying of such a large force in time to provide two or three weeks' advance warning. The expected warning time for the preparation of such a force was based on the belief that the Soviet units employed would come mainly if not exclusively from the western USSR. The forces there were not normally kept at full wartime manning levels, and also relied on the civilian economy to provide the motor transport vehicles needed for supporting major deployments. Soviet divisions stationed in East Germany and Czechoslovakia routinely had their full manpower and equipment complements, but most intelligence analysts believed that Moscow would be reluctant to deplete its forces facing NATO. The Soviets probably would not expect NATO to react, according to the analysts, but would not be willing to take this for granted.²⁹

CIA analysts also posited some military measures short of invasion that the Soviets might employ to heighten pressure on the Polish regime. These included high visibility exercises in the western USSR, accompanied by the call up of some reservists, movements of air transport and airborne forces, and deployment of some additional divisions into Poland under the guise of exercises. All of these moves had been seen in the run up to the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968.³⁰

According to Gates, who was the DCI's Executive Assistant at the time, Turner also said at the 23 September White House meeting that Moscow viewed the developments in Poland as a threat to the entire communist system. He said the Soviets feared a ripple effect elsewhere in Europe and in the USSR. Turner postulated that the labor movement's demonstration of its ability to extract fundamental concessions from the communist government had led the Soviets to see the current situation as potentially more contagious than the earlier crises in their East European bloc (apparently referring to Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968). Gates says that Turner concluded by stating his belief that because the Soviets saw the developments in Poland as threatening the fabric of the Warsaw Pact, they could not let it spread. But Turner also added that there were signs of disagreement among the Soviet leaders on what to do about it.³¹

Brzezinski stressed that strong Western reaction and the likelihood of strong Polish resistance might well deter Moscow. The meeting participants

29. The estimated warning time is given in the Summary of the 23 September meeting, cited above. The description of the basis for this estimate is from the author's participation in its construction.

30. "USSR-Poland: Moscow's Reaction to Crisis," decl. *NID*, 18 September 1980.

31. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 164.

agreed that a letter should be prepared for the President to send to some of his NATO counterparts, urging them to weigh in to make clear to Moscow the repercussions of a military intervention. Exactly one month later this group of senior officials met again to review a series of proposed steps designed to penalize the Soviet Union severely in the event military intervention was actually carried out. Brzezinski's personal account of that meeting stresses that it was important "not [to] discuss how likely such an intervention is but focus on what we would do (1) to deter it if it was imminent and (2) how we should react if it took place." The proposals agreed upon at the meeting were then sent to the allies for consultation and coordination.³²

32. "Summary of Conclusions, Special Coordinating Committee meeting, Tuesday, September 23, 1980," *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 465. See also Brzezinski's day-to-day notes for the period from 4 October through 12 December 1980, published in "A White House Diary," *Orbis* 32, no. 1 (winter 1988), 32-48, which includes a description of the 23 October 1980 SCC meeting.

Chapter 2: The Confrontation Escalates

In the last week of September Soviet media attacks began portraying the Polish situation in the context of an East-West confrontation. Western “forces” were accused of “inciting antisocialist actions in the [Polish Peoples Republic],” attempting to “drive a wedge in the relations with the fraternal states of the socialist commonwealth” and propagating “slanderous fabrications put out by the West’s sabotage services.” A long-scheduled joint Soviet–East German military exercise held at this time was given an unusual amount of television coverage. It concluded with a broadcast by the Soviet officer in overall command of the Warsaw Pact military forces, Marshal Kulikov, declaring that the exercise demonstrated the bloc countries were “ready to defend the revolutionary achievements of socialism and fulfill their international duty.”¹

The rhetorical temperature was sufficiently high to prompt Brzezinski to discuss the sensitivity of the situation with the head of the U.S. AFL-CIO, which was then organizing support for the Polish trade unions. The support from U.S. labor unions had already come to the attention of the public media at the time of the Gdansk agreement, and U.S. policy officials were concerned that such efforts could provide Moscow a platform for portraying the growing power of the Polish labor forces as a product of Western scheming.²

A benchmark event occurred on 3 October, when Solidarity carried out a one hour “warning strike” to protest the regime’s delay in implementing the Gdansk agreement. The effect of the strike itself was mainly symbolic, but Intelligence Community analysts pointed out that it demonstrated vividly the evolution that had occurred in the popular support and organizational effectiveness of the Polish labor movement. A single, national

1. Thomas Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling in the Polish Crisis* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 48, 51.

2. “U.S. Unions Ship Money into Poland,” *NYT*, 1 September 1980, A4. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 164. According to Gates, the AFL-CIO question was raised at a 29 September SCC meeting.

“command center” had organized and carried out a strike implemented simultaneously throughout the country. This demonstration added significant weight to Solidarity’s threat a few weeks later to call a general strike in response to the regime’s obstruction of Solidarity’s registration as an independent trade union.³

On 24 October, receiving what they had been told was to be Solidarity’s official registration, the union’s leaders learned that the Warsaw Provincial Court had unilaterally inserted into the charter text a clause that stipulated union recognition of the party’s leading role in matters of state. Language to this effect had been part of the agreement signed at Gdansk, but that agreement had not extended to incorporation of the same language as a “party supremacy” clause in the official founding charter of the independent trade unions. The party’s insistence on this had been a matter of contention in the weeks preceding the court ruling. Solidarity’s leaders had been led to believe in mid-October, however, that the government accepted their compromise offer to include in an appendix to the charter a statement on the “leading role” of the party. They saw the Provincial Court’s move as the first step in a regime walk-back strategy, and responded by threatening a general strike beginning 12 November if talks before then had not resolved the issue. The union and the regime appeared to be on another countdown to a clash that could include a violent breakdown in public order if one or both sides did not give ground.⁴

On 30 October the U.S. government learned that First Secretary Kania and Prime Minister Pinkowski had made an unexpected trip to Moscow to meet with the Soviet political leaders. This was described in the Polish media as an “emergency trip,” but its origins and purpose were obscured in the public communiqués from both Warsaw and Moscow. The officially released statement by the Soviet public media following the meeting (31 October in *Pravda*) was crafted to avoid any overt indication that Moscow was putting pressure on the Poles. Intelligence Community analysts nonetheless concluded that the meeting had been “hurriedly arranged” by the Soviets as a venue for pressuring Polish leaders to exert their own muscle to bring

3. The same assessments of this event were shared by intelligence analysts (see “Poland,” decl. *NID*, 4 October 1980), the U.S. Embassy (see Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 48), and journalists (see Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution, 80–81*, and Ascherson, *Polish August, 189–90*).

4. The ongoing battle over this issue was tracked in the now declassified *NID* articles, “Poland,” of 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, and 29 October 1980. See also Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 61; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution, 81*; Ascherson, *Polish August, 193–97*.

an end to the erosion of party power, with the threat of Soviet military intervention if they failed to do so.⁵

Scenarios for Use of Force

While these events were unfolding the CIA was reporting that the Soviet military was continuing to improve the readiness of selected divisions in the western USSR, and testing much of the basic structure necessary to invade Poland. The reporting described evidence that in mid-October some forces subordinate to each of the three armies in the western part of the Ukraine were exercising. This activity lasted about a week, and was followed by the initiation of similar exercises by at least some units in the Baltic republics and Belorussia. The CIA also described training that had given Soviet command and staff personnel an opportunity to review and update contingency plans centered on Poland.

The CIA reporting pointed out that the forces observed in this activity were still well short of what analysts believed would be Soviet requirements for a military intervention into Poland. The reports also noted that the normal troop rotation and infusion of new conscripts that was taking place in the USSR would offset the increased preparedness for some time. In the last week of October, the CIA's assessment was that the Soviets had not prepared an invasion force approaching the size that intelligence analysts estimated would be employed to intervene in Poland. Nonetheless, the CIA also reported that while "Soviet intervention was not inevitable, . . . the chances for it are high enough that we should be prepared for it."⁶

By this time, however, the CIA was aware that the Polish regime had started constructing its own plans for employing force to suppress the popular opposition. A small group of Polish General Staff officers had been assigned the task of drafting plans for imposition of martial law. One of

5. "Poland," decl. *NID*, articles of 30 and 31 October 1980. The press attributed the meeting to Kania's initiative to discuss issues of concern to him. See "Top Polish Leaders Fly to Soviet Union," *NYT*, 30 October 1980, A6. Minutes of the Soviet Politburo discussions preceding and following this meeting, however, specifically state that it was held at the "invitation" of the Soviet Politburo, for an agenda that had been worked out in detail beforehand. See the comments by Gorbachev and Tikhonov in the records of the CPSU CC Politburo sessions of 29 and 31 October 1980, Documents 2 and 3 in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*.

6. "Poland: Crisis at Another Peak," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 31 October 1980, and author's participation in the estimates.

those assigned to this group was Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, who had been a clandestine source reporting to the CIA for many years.⁷

According to Kuklinski, a “Party-State Leadership Staff,” headed by Prime Minister Josef Pinkowski, had been established on 24 August to oversee the design of measures for employing force to reassert the party’s power.⁸ This was the same date that the major shake-up had taken place in the composition of party and government leadership bodies, and that Pinkowski had been selected as the new prime minister. Others on this Staff included Minister of Defense Jaruzelski, Minister of Internal Affairs Milewski, and Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski, who had been the point man for negotiations with Solidarity. The drafting of the martial law plans was initially assigned to a group of five general staff officers, one of whom was Kuklinski. The group was headed by the Chief of the Polish General Staff, General Siwicki. Kuklinski has said that the drafting of specific implementation measures began on 22 October, and that by early November a preliminary plan—detailed enough to have included language for decrees to be broadcast upon implementation—had been completed.⁹

Judgments on the willingness and ability of the Polish leadership to use its own forces to reassert party authority formed the lynchpin of the CIA’s assessments of likely Soviet courses of action. The CIA postulated that if the Poles were willing (and able) to use coercive force, the Soviets could opt for sending in a few divisions to provide backup—as a reserve force and as an intimidating presence. The prevailing view in the CIA, however, continued to be that the Polish leadership would not or could not make this commitment.

The dominant view among the CIA’s analysts was that while the Polish internal security forces probably would be willing to carry out orders for a forceful crackdown, the regular Polish military would be loath to do so.

7. After Polish regime officials began in 1986 leaking their own spun version that the U.S. had an inside source to the martial law planning, Kuklinski—who by then was living in the West—gave a public account of his efforts in a 1987 interview for the Paris-based Polish émigré magazine *Kultura*. Portions of it were printed a year later as “The Crushing of Solidarity,” in *Orbis* 32, no. 1 (winter 1988): 7–31. This presentation also appears as “The Suppression of Solidarity,” in Robert Kostrzewska, ed., *Between East and West: Writings from Kultura* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 72–98. References herein are from this printing. Gates, *From the Shadows*, Chapter 13, makes many references to the importance of Kuklinski’s reporting in 1981.

8. Kuklinski, “Suppression of Solidarity,” 80. According to Mark Kramer the formal title of this group was “Party-State [Government] Crisis Staff.” See *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, translator’s notes 3 and 17.

9. Kuklinski, “Suppression of Solidarity,” 81.

Analysts frequently invoked the phrase “Poles won’t shoot Poles,” which one scholar on Polish affairs has described as an “unwritten commandment of the national tradition.” Jaruzelski was alleged to have used it to describe the military attitude during the events in 1976.¹⁰

CIA intelligence analysts continued to believe, therefore, that if the Polish political leaders ordered a military crackdown, part or all of the military might refuse orders to carry it out. The analysts suggested, in fact, that an attempt by the Poles to impose force would actually increase the prospect that the Soviets would be compelled to intervene. The analysts believed, therefore, that even though the Soviets wanted the Poles to be the ones to use force, and even though the possibility of a Polish attempt was not ruled out, the uncertainties of virtually any situation for use of force would drive Moscow to ready a sizable invasion force of thirty or more divisions, if only as a safety net.

CIA assessments acknowledged the possibility of alternative scenarios in which the initial Soviet intervention force might be less than the thirty divisions, although these were regarded as much less likely. One such alternative would have been an approach similar to what was done in Czechoslovakia in 1968. This would entail sending airborne units to seize Warsaw and perhaps a few other major centers, while a small number of divisions took key positions in eastern Poland. This might even be done under the guise of an exercise or an ostensible “request for assistance” by the Poles. Introduction of the larger forces would follow more gradually. This was viewed by CIA analysts as involving high risk, however, given that Poland was so much larger territorially than Czechoslovakia, with more than twice the population and armed forces. It was thus considered mainly to be a course the Soviets might adopt if faced with a rapid deterioration in public order and regime control, where time would not permit readying the full force Moscow would prefer. A variant of this “quick reaction” course postulated the insertion of ten or so divisions drawn from the Soviet forces based in East Europe, which were routinely kept at high readiness levels, with additional forces brought in from the western USSR as soon as they could be readied. This option, however, had the drawback of reducing the Soviet forces facing NATO.¹¹

10. “Poland: Crisis at Another Peak,” Special Analysis, decl. NID, 31 October 1980. For the “unwritten commandment,” see Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 248. Mark Kramer has questioned the validity of the statement attributed to Jaruzelski. See “Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis,” note 22.

11. “Poland: Crisis at Another Peak,” Special Analysis, decl. NID, 31 October 1980, supplemented with author’s description of the analytic background.

U.S. policy officials, as indicated in the minutes of the 23 September meeting of the Special Coordinating Committee, generally shared the intelligence analysts' belief that Polish authorities would not use force to crush the labor movement, and that armed resistance to a Soviet intervention would be likely. One notable departure is recorded by Gates in his description of views expressed by Brzezinski in a conversation with DCI Turner on 30 October. According to Gates, Brzezinski said he believed that rather than an outright invasion, the Soviets probably would attempt a "coup" in collaboration with Polish hard-liners, Soviet supporters inside Poland, and Polish police. Turner responded that this would be very risky for the Soviets because of the potential for opposition by the Polish army. Brzezinski said the Polish army would react in a unified way only if they were ordered from the top, and that the top would be subverted by the Soviets.¹²

This contrasts with Brzezinski's own description of a discussion he had with Turner the previous day, in which he says he pressed the DCI for the Intelligence Community's latest assessment of the chances of Soviet intervention in Poland, because he was "becoming increasingly concerned that this is likely." The alternative scenario he gave to Turner on 30 October may have been stimulated by his having recently learned that the Poles had begun preparing plans for martial law. Nonetheless, his own accounts indicate that he continued to hold some skepticism on the willingness of Polish authorities to collaborate in the use of force against Polish workers.¹³

Whatever the differences in specific scenarios, these discussions reflected the common concern over the threat of Soviet-imposed force to crush the growing popular movements in Poland. The analytic question was whether the force would be imposed by the Soviets directly and unilaterally, or by the Poles themselves under Soviet pressure, or some collaborative effort between Moscow and Warsaw. The prevailing view was that the Poles would not be willing or able to carry out a forceful suppression solely on their own. This meant that Soviet military force would be required, and the prevailing view was that any Soviet military intervention would include the mobilization of a large force.

12. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 165.

13. Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 34 (on subversion from the top) and 39-40 (on skepticism regarding collaboration).

A Collision Course

Soon after Kania and Pinkowski returned from their short-notice meeting in Moscow, Solidarity added new demands to its already existing one that there be no change in the statute for its registration as a free trade union. The union leadership insisted that the independent farmers be granted their demand to register as another independent union—"Rural Solidarity"—and added some demands from their summer list, such as access to the media and an end to repression of union and opposition activists. Solidarity also reaffirmed its intent to launch a national strike on 12 November if the issues were not resolved. This confrontation seemed to be building to the point where events could spin out of control and result in the use of force.

On 10 November, however, the Polish Supreme Court ratified Solidarity's compromise proposal to exclude the "supremacy" article from the text of its legal charter, and instead to include a "leading role" reference in an appendix to the charter. This court decision was actually the result of closed-door negotiations between Solidarity and the government that did not reach settlement until 3:00 A.M. on the morning the court announced its revised decision. Western media reported that while it had been widely known that such negotiations were going on, Solidarity and government officials refused to talk about it in order to avoid undermining the myth of an independent court.¹⁴

The national strike that had been threatened for 12 November, the potential weight of which had been demonstrated in the one-hour national strike on 3 October, was canceled. The court ruling was widely seen as another major victory for the union. Western media described Solidarity as "a powerful labor movement that forced the government to back down," and as having become "a sanctioned part of Polish life."¹⁵

Moscow's unhappiness with this outcome was evident. A day before the ruling was announced, the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw had made a last minute effort to influence the court's decision. At the same time, in a clumsy public pressure move that may have been initiated in connection with the

14. "Warsaw and Union Fail to End Dispute on Statute Wording," *NYT*, 10 November 1980, A1; "Court Backs Union in Poland's Dispute Over Role of Party," *NYT*, 11 November 1980, A1. Ascherson, *Polish August*, 198–99, provides some detail on these negotiations. Among on-site observers, Ascherson had exceptional access to some of the internal machinations of events during this period.

15. "Court Backs Union . . .," *NYT*, 11 November 1980, A1; "Polish Crisis Only Delayed?" *NYT*, 12 November 1980, A1. See also Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 84–85.

ambassador's last ditch effort, Warsaw and Moscow announced that Soviet and Polish troops had held joint exercises inside Poland in the past few days. Film clips purportedly of these exercises were shown prominently on Polish television. The films, however, showed tanks and soldiers operating in what was obviously summer climate (leaves on the trees, troops in summer clothing) when conditions in Poland were cold and snowy. Descriptions of the films as "fake" appeared in Western media.¹⁶

After the announcement of the court ruling, a diatribe was delivered over Moscow television by Leonid Zamyatin, the head of the International Information (i.e., propaganda) Department of the Soviet Party's Central Committee. He painted developments in Poland in standard Cold War terms, describing them as the product of "antisocialist elements in the West pouring millions of dollars into Poland to support opposition groups." He claimed this was an effort to "structurally and legally formalize opposition to the existing social system"—in effect, subversion by the Western Cold War opponent.¹⁷

Any expectations that the court ruling would produce a respite period were quickly squelched. New confrontations between regional party and government authorities and the regional union representatives broke out almost immediately. Medical workers, nurses, and even some doctors staged a sit-in strike in Gdansk; representatives of some seventy factories in Lublin demanded wage increases; textile workers in Lodz, southwest of Warsaw, demanded negotiations for higher wages; and Polish journalists continued to challenge the regime's censorship regulations.¹⁸

On 24 November, just two weeks after the Polish Supreme Court compromise, railway workers demanding renegotiation of pay raises staged a two-hour strike on the commuter lines. They threatened a longer walkout for the next day if a meeting was not convened. It had been the threat to railway connections that had most alarmed Moscow back at the time of the July strikes in Lublin, and this time the Soviet media were even more strident. A *Pravda* article reiterated long-standing Soviet sensitivity to potential threats to the transport system, and for the first time attacked Solidarity

16. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. NIDs of 8 and 10 November 1980; "Polish Crisis Only Delayed?" *NYT*, 12 November 1980, A1; "Poland's Union Leaders Appeal for an End to Strikes," *NYT*, 17 November 1980, A1.

17. "High Soviet Aide Warns Poland on Liberalization," *NYT*, 16 November 1980, 14.

18. Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 62; "Polish Governor Offers Resignation in Response to Worker Demands," *NYT*, 18 November 1980, A12; "Polish Provincial Aides Resign in Disputes With Union," *NYT*, 20 November 1980, A8.

by name. The official Soviet public information agency TASS said that a general railroad strike could affect Poland's national security and disrupt transit links between East Germany and the USSR.¹⁹

The actions of Walesa and Kania during this turmoil seemed to demonstrate that both recognized the situation could easily erupt and lead to repercussions neither wanted. Solidarity leaders sought to moderate what they saw as provocative actions explicitly threatening the party's authority, and cautioned workers against uncoordinated strikes. Kania demonstrated some willingness to engage in a dialog to implement the Gdansk agreement. He also replaced over a third of the provincial party secretaries with people he portrayed as willing to implement the provisions. (His efforts in this regard were undermined, however, when he appointed to the Warsaw party leadership post the individual who had been the party's regional leader in Gdansk at the time of the 1970 crisis.)²⁰

In this volatile atmosphere, aggressive action by either side was bound to be incendiary, and that was indeed the impact of what became known as the "Narozniak affair." On the night of 20 November, just as the prospect of railroad strikes was rising, the Polish police conducted a night search of Solidarity's Warsaw offices and confiscated what was described as a classified document containing information on how the regime intended to deal with dissidents. The next day they arrested a young mathematician named Jan Narozniak who worked as a volunteer printer for Solidarity, and a clerk from the public prosecutor's office named Piotr Sapielo who was accused of passing the document to Narozniak.

Reactions to the arrests initially were local, but over the next few days they gained momentum and quickly raised the confrontation between the regime and union to a new level. On the evening of the day that Narozniak and Sapielo were arrested, the Warsaw region's MKZ (Interfactory Founding Commission) threatened a strike alert if the two were not released. Three days later, the same day as the railroad strike, the workers at the Ursus tractor factory near Warsaw went on strike to protest the arrests. The head of the Warsaw MKZ held a press conference the same day to announce an expanded list of demands. These included the release of additional jailed Solidarity activists and other dissidents; the disclosure of the origins of the

19. "Poland," decl. *NID*, 24 November 1980. The TASS article was also described in "Poland's Rail Workers in a 2-Hour Work Stoppage," *NYT*, 25 November, A1.

20. "Poland," decl. *NIDs* of 19 and 20 November 1980; also "Polish Union Leaders Appeal . . .," *NYT*, 17 November 1980, A12; "Purge in Poland Called Broadest Since '56 Crisis," *NYT*, 22 November 1980, A1.

seized document; establishment of a joint commission to investigate the powers of the police; and a limitation on the budget of the prosecutor's office.²¹ The MKZ also announced that its regional strike would begin at noon on 27 November if the demands were not met. Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission (KKP) immediately announced its support for the regional strike.

The extended list of demands put forth by the Warsaw MKZ constituted a direct challenge to the regime's security apparatus, and was viewed by most outside observers as more than even a party leadership inclined to compromise could accept and still survive politically. This was also the view of some of Solidarity's national leadership, who tried to moderate the actions of the Warsaw unions. Their ability to find a way out, however, was constrained by the pressures from much of their own constituency, reinforced by strikes and confrontations taking place in other regions of the country. The union and the regime once again seemed to be in a countdown to collision.

The Intelligence Picture in Washington

An Intelligence Community *Alert Memorandum* on 25 November described the situation as "the gravest challenge to [the Polish regime's] authority since the strikes on the Baltic coast ended in August." The *Memorandum* said the demands of the Warsaw regional commission went beyond what intelligence analysts believed the regime could accept. The de facto ultimatum of a regional general strike if the regime did not enter into talks on those demands was viewed as setting forth a win-lose proposition that moved the situation closer to "coercive measures by the regime or a possible Soviet military invasion." The regime's flexibility seemed all the more constrained by Moscow's public denunciation of the threatened railroad strike. The *Alert Memorandum* again said that there was as yet no evidence of large-scale mobilization or logistics activity indicative of a Soviet decision to intervene

21. "Poland," decl. *NID*, 21 November 1980, and "Challenge to Polish Leadership Increases," *Alert Memorandum*, decl. *NID*, 26 November 1980. Some press mention was given in "Polish Unions Warn of Stoppages," *NYT*, 24 November 1980, A4, and "Poland's Rail Workers in a 2-Hour Stoppage," *NYT*, 25 November 1980, A1. For the most part, however, the western media did not pick up on the full impact of the Narozeniak Affair until after the implications of the regime concessions became apparent. Detailed accounts of this event and reactions to it are in Ascherson, *Polish August*, 204-8; and Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 90-91.

militarily, but that exercises and preparatory measures in the preceding month or so had positioned the Soviets to rapidly ready an invasion force.²²

The next day Brzezinski, after consulting with the President, proposed to Secretary of State Muskie and Secretary of Defense Brown that a background briefing be given to the press to spotlight for the Soviets the adverse consequences of a military intervention in Poland. He proposed that these include the rupture of political détente and East-West economic cooperation in Europe, increased NATO defense budgets, and overt U.S.-Chinese cooperation. He also suggested pointing out to the Soviets the friction that a military intervention in Poland could cause in Moscow's relations with the nonaligned states.²³

A press statement was in fact given that day by the State Department, apparently on its own initiative, but its content was quite different from the approach Brzezinski was proposing. It described Solidarity as making itself a rival of the party, and said that "resolution is an internal matter for the Polish people and the Polish government" and that "we intend to refrain from any words or actions that could possibly hinder the earliest possible solution of that problem and we expect others to do the same." The State Department spokesman said that the U.S. had no indication that any Soviet troop action was imminent, but pointed out that the Soviets had taken recent steps to improve their readiness.²⁴

Before any specific actions appear to have been taken on Brzezinski's recommendations, another eleventh hour deal in Warsaw seemed again to have at least temporarily defused the situation. Early on the morning of 27 November (the evening of the 26th in Washington) Narozniak and Sapielo were released, and the government announced it was willing to begin talks by noon that day on the other demands. A settlement was also reached with the railroad workers. The potentially disastrous consequences of the threatened regional shutdown were averted at least for the time.

Intelligence analysts viewed this as merely a respite, however. The perception of "capitulation" to Solidarity was expected to lead to new divisions in the party. Observers outside the Intelligence Community shared this view.²⁵

22. "Challenge to Polish Leadership Increases," *Alert Memorandum*, decl. *NID*, 26 November 1980.

23. Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 34.

24. "U.S. Worried, Hopes for Calm in Poland," *NYT*, 27 November 1981, A11. The statement was given by State Department Spokesman John Trattner.

25. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 28 November 1980. See also "Poland Frees

Although the regime had gone further than many Western observers had expected, Solidarity still showed no flexibility on its remaining demands for curtailing the internal security organs, which intelligence analysts had already considered as well beyond what could be accepted by the regime. And however constructive the regime concessions on the Naroziak affair might have been in pulling back from a zero sum confrontation, Western analysts expected that Moscow would see it as yet another indication of the Polish leadership's inability or unwillingness to stem the erosion of party supremacy.

In the weeks preceding the Naroziak affair, the CIA had described continuing Soviet efforts to raise the readiness level of military units in the western USSR as an indication that Moscow's concern over events remained high. By the time Naroziak was arrested, the call-up of at least a limited component of reservists had been identified in two normally low strength divisions, one in Belorussia and one in the Carpathian area.²⁶

The CIA pointed out, however, that weather conditions were continuing to impede efforts to determine the status of most of the Soviet divisions garrisoned in the western USSR. The CIA said it had been able to obtain evidence of the status of only twelve of the thirty-nine divisions based in the western USSR, and that activity had been observed in only six of them. As small as was the sampling of divisions, however, if the same proportion of activities had been extended to those for which the status was unknown, the number engaged in some level of activity would have been around twenty. Nonetheless, even if more widespread activity could have been confirmed, determining how much of it was beyond scheduled training would have led to some ambiguity.

For the CIA's military analysts, the most important barometer of preparations for large-scale intervention in Poland was the status of the military components that provided support functions such as transportation and supply. Activities in these components had been the strongest indicator prior to the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. The search for indications of Soviet intentions on military intervention continued to be domi-

"Two Jailed Workers in the Face of New Strike Threats," *NYT*, 27 November 1980, A1; and subsequent recording of similar views by observers on the scene such as Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 93.

26. The activity in the Soviet combat division in the Carpathian area is described in "Poland," decl. *NID*, 15 November 1980, and also is referred to in "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 12 December 1980. The fact that one division was also seen at this time mobilizing in Belorussia is stated in a declassified retrospective CIA analysis, "Approaching the Brink: Moscow and the Polish Crisis, November–December 1980," *Intelligence Assessment*, disseminated in December 1980.

nated by the expectation of a force large enough to overwhelm any potential military opposition and deter or suppress spontaneous opposition from the civilian populace. Such a force would require activation of a large logistic and rear echelon support structure. In normal peacetime posture these support elements were at an even lower state of readiness than the least ready combat divisions, and thus required a proportionally greater mobilization of reservists and civilian vehicles.²⁷

In the last week of November, the Intelligence Community reported that there was at most only sparse activity at the Soviet military support facilities in the western USSR for which the Agency had been able to acquire direct evidence. This relatively low level of activity in the support elements, coupled with what was seen in the admittedly small sample of combat units, led to the conclusion that as of that time preparations for an imminent invasion were not underway.

The Intelligence Community also informed policy officials, however, that the measures that had already been taken had positioned the Soviet armed forces to be able, under urgent circumstances, to carry out final preparations for a large-scale military intervention in less than a week. These measures included raising the readiness of some units considered likely candidates for any invasion of Poland, and establishment of an important part of a command structure for an invasion. The mobilization activities previously observed in the two divisions in Belorussia and the Carpathian area of Ukraine were reported to be continuing, and similar activity had begun at a third normally low strength division, located in the Baltic region.²⁸

The CIA concluded that the Soviet leaders' continued inability to influence the situation in Poland was pushing them toward a decision that a military crackdown was required, and that if the Polish regime would not do it, then Moscow would send in its own forces. Intelligence reports pointed out that while the adverse political and military effects of an invasion might give the Soviets pause, they would not forestall an invasion if Moscow saw the Polish authorities continuing to lose control and conceding more to the unions.

27. Author's description.

28. "USSR-Poland: Moscow's Deepening Concern," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 28 November 1980; "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NIDs* of 29 November and (regarding the Baltic Division) 1 December and 2 December 1980; also some of author's description. The identification at this time of a third division being mobilized is described in the declassified retrospective analysis "Approaching the Brink."

On 29 November the Commanding General of the Group of Soviet Forces in East Germany announced that through 9 December members of the Western Military Liaison Missions in East Germany would be barred from travel in almost all areas along the Polish border. At about this same time intelligence reported that stories were circulating that leaves had been canceled for East German air defense personnel, pending a “big action” that might be called in the coming week. Referring to these developments in his daily notebook, Brzezinski characterized the situation as “gathering clouds over Poland are getting darker.” He records that he had been more openly stressing to the press the “calamitous consequences of a Soviet military intervention,” even though there was still disagreement within U.S. policy agencies as to whether anything should be said publicly.²⁹

29. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 1 December 1980; Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 34.

Chapter 3:

U.S Launches Public Policy and Diplomatic Offensive

At the beginning of December, the pattern of events moved into overdrive, with a flood of intelligence reporting on fast breaking events, White House meetings held almost daily to determine how the United States should react, and various public and diplomatic moves.

1 December

The Polish party began a Central Committee “plenum” meeting, and the same day the annual meeting of Warsaw Pact defense ministers convened in Bucharest.

An intelligence situation report described “an unusually high level of Warsaw Pact military activity” in and around Poland involving Soviet, East German, Polish, and possibly Czechoslovak forces that was “unprecedented for this time of year.” The intelligence report suggested the activities were at a minimum designed to present an intimidating signal to the Polish population, and could reflect further contingency preparations for a military intervention. The same intelligence report, however, said that while the observed measures had further heightened Soviet readiness, the available evidence did not yet show the extensive troop mobilization and logistics buildup that would be needed to support a large-scale invasion. According to Gates, this was accompanied by the caveat that poor weather was still adversely affecting the Intelligence Community’s collection of information on activities in Soviet military units.¹

Brzezinski called attention to this latest intelligence during his briefing of the President that morning. He said he believed U.S. officials needed to ask themselves if their government had been clear enough in its public statements on Poland, and had done enough in pressing the issue with its allies. The President responded by drafting another letter to Prime Minister

1. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. NID, 1 December 1980; Gates, *From the Shadows*, 166.

Thatcher, Chancellor Schmidt, and President Giscard d'Estaing. In this letter, which was sent that same day, the President described his concerns over activities that had been observed in Soviet and East European military forces, citing such indicators as "unprecedented travel restrictions in East Germany along the border with Poland." He characterized these events as indicating that "the Polish situation has entered its most critical stage," and that "preparations by the Soviets for possible intervention have progressed further than at any previous time."²

The President's letter said that the U.S. government "will take every opportunity to express to the Soviet leaders our deepest concern about any possible military intervention in Poland." He asked the allied leaders to "consult very closely with us on your actions to prevent Soviet intervention." Simultaneous with the sending of this letter, the U.S. embassies in those capitals were told they would be receiving intelligence that was to be shared with their host governments, and that they were to urge those governments to express their views—publicly or privately—about the consequences of Soviet intervention.

2 December

The Intelligence Community disseminated another *Alert Memorandum*, this time accompanied by a cover note from DCI Turner to the President. The DCI declared, "I believe the Soviets are readying their forces for military intervention in Poland. We do not know, however, whether they have made a decision to intervene, or are still attempting to find a political solution."³

The *Alert Memorandum* repeated the earlier descriptions of military activities in and around Poland that were "highly unusual or unprecedented for this time of year," and the evidence of preparations for an imminent unscheduled joint exercise involving Soviet, East German, Polish, and possibly Czechoslovak forces. At the same time, however, the *Memorandum* pointed out that because of the continuing problems with cloud cover, "we do not know the status of most of the ground forces that would be used to invade Poland." It said the pattern of mobilization observed in a few

2. Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 35, describes the genesis of the letter. The text and the instructions to the embassies are in declassified State Department cable 31696, 2 December 1980, in *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*.

3. "Poland," *Alert Memorandum*, decl. NID, 3 December 1980. DCI Turner's cover note is described in Gates, *From the Shadows*, 166.

divisions suggested that “additional mobilization or training is likely to be taking place undetected,” and that a substantial buildup of forces “could now be underway” in the western areas of the USSR.

In fact, the only specific new activity in the western USSR described in that day’s situation report was in the combat division based in the Baltic region where some mobilization activity had been already observed in late November. This meant that there were still only three divisions where such mobilization had been seen to be underway. The *Alert Memorandum* thus concluded with the hedged judgment that the activities seen to date did not “necessarily indicate that a Soviet invasion was imminent . . . [but] suggest that a Soviet intervention is increasingly likely.”

After receiving these reports, Brzezinski sent the President a memorandum saying Soviet intervention had become quite probable, and enclosed a draft public statement that he recommended the President issue jointly with President-elect Reagan. He told the President that there was not unanimous support among the national security officials for taking such a public step, but that he nonetheless believed that it was time to do so, to establish a clear historical record that the United States did everything it could to deter the Soviets.⁴

In fact, despite the disagreement among senior policy officials on the merits of official public statements, “unofficial” descriptions of intelligence on Soviet military preparations for intervention had begun appearing in the press. On 2 December, for example, a *Washington Post* front-page article described a call-up of reservists in Soviet divisions in the western Ukraine near the Polish border. Another *Post* article the next day reported a “widely held view” among unnamed “senior U.S. officials” that “Moscow will move militarily if necessary.” This same article described the thirty-division invasion scenario that had been presented in several CIA assessments since September, attributing the information to unnamed “specialists.” The *New York Times* reported that U.S. intelligence showed increased activity by the Polish security forces.⁵ What Brzezinski was seeking from the President, however, went beyond such “backgrounders,” and would in effect constitute a *de facto* demarche delivered through the public media.

That evening in Warsaw, the Polish party’s Central Committee plenum meeting concluded with the announcement of a number of major changes

4. Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 35.

5. “Soviet Reservists Activated Since August,” *WP*, 2 December 1980, A1; “U.S. Warns Soviets Against Invasion of Poland,” *WP*, 3 December, A1; “U.S. Cautioning on Intervention in Polish Crisis,” *NYT*, 3 December 1980, A1.

in the composition of its Politburo. Most prominent among these was the elevation of two known hard-liners, Mstislaw Moczar and Tadeusz Grabski. The CIA reported that both individuals seemed to have been strong advocates of greater discipline in the party, and their elevation was interpreted as an effort to stem a process of disintegration in the lower party ranks. Brzezinski called these changes to the President's attention in his morning meeting with him the next day.⁶

3 December

An intelligence report said that Soviet forces in East Germany had been ordered to be in position to move within the next two to five days (5 to 8 December) in case Moscow decided to invade Poland. According to this information, the movement of forces into Poland was to be under the cover of combined exercises involving Soviet, East German, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian forces.⁷

Later that day, President Carter approved the text of the public statement Brzezinski had proposed to him the previous day, with the deletion of the reference to consultations with the President-elect. At a noon meeting, Brzezinski and Secretaries Muskie and Brown agreed that the President should precede this public statement with a private letter to Soviet leader Brezhnev. By early afternoon, a letter had been drafted and approved by the President and dispatched to Moscow informing Brezhnev that President Carter intended to release that day a "public statement of concern regarding the developments in Poland." The letter said that "Before doing so, I wish to convey to you the firm intention of the United States not to exploit the events in Poland nor threaten legitimate Soviet security interests in the region. . . . At the same time I have to state that our relationship would be most adversely affected" if force were used in Poland. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow confirmed the letter's delivery to Brezhnev shortly before 4:30 P.M. EST, and the White House immediately released the following public statement:

The United States is watching with growing concern the unprecedented buildup of Soviet forces along the Polish border and the closing of certain frontier regions along the border. The United States

6. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 3 December 1980; "Polish Communists Oust 4 Key Leaders; General Gets Top Post," *NYT*, 3 December 1980, 1; Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 36.

7. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 3 December 1980.

has also taken note of Soviet references to alleged “antisocialist” forces within Poland. We know from postwar history that such allegations have sometimes preceded military intervention.

The United States continues to believe that the Polish people and authorities should be free to work out their internal difficulties without outside interference. The United States, as well as some Western Governments, and also the Soviet Union, have pledged economic assistance to Poland in order to alleviate internal Polish difficulties. The United States has no interest in exploiting in any fashion the Polish difficulties for its political ends.

Foreign military intervention in Poland would have most negative consequences for East-West relations in general and U.S.-Soviet relations in particular. The charter of the United Nations establishes the right of all states, both large and small, to exist free of foreign interference, regardless of ideology, alliances, or geographic location. I want all countries to know that the attitude and future policies of the United States toward the Soviet Union would be directly and very adversely affected by any Soviet use of force in Poland.⁸

As was the case with the President’s 1 December letter to allied leaders, the 3 December public statement was followed by the dispatch to U.S. embassies of a summary of the latest intelligence, with instructions that it be shared with allied governments. The embassies were also instructed to inform allied governments that the United States “would anticipate a strong and adverse reaction throughout the world to any Soviet intervention.”⁹

That same afternoon, Brzezinski provided a background briefing to the media. In describing the intelligence evidence, he emphasized that the United States viewed the Soviet intervention as neither imminent nor inevitable. In his daily notes he recorded that he did this because he felt it was important not to create the impression that an invasion was “about to happen,” because “[a] sense of inevitability in a way makes such a strike more likely and in a curious psychological way almost legitimates it.”¹⁰

8. The text of the letter is reproduced in Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 36–37, along with the account of its preparation and release. The President’s statement is in “Text of U.S. Statement on Poland,” *NYT*, 4 December 1980, A10.

9. The guidance to U.S. embassies is in declassified State Department cable 323419, 6 December 1980, in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

10. Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 37. Descriptions of the press briefings are in “Carter Expresses Concern of U.S. on Soviet Stance,” *NYT*, 4 December 1980, A1.

While this was taking place in Washington, the Polish party was issuing what was widely interpreted as its harshest public statement to date in terms of outright threat of a crackdown. Stating that “the future of Poland was at stake,” it lashed out at Poles “who do not hide their counterrevolutionary plans,” and vowed to upset the schemes for “anarchy and chaos.” In the lexicon of Soviet bloc parties, a charge of being “counterrevolutionary” was equivalent to being labeled an enemy of the state. The Polish media also announced that the Military Council of the Polish Ministry of National Defense had met and expressed “profound concern” over the “serious threat” to social and national order. An intelligence situation report the next day described this diatribe as suggesting that some decisions on the conditions for the use of force had been made at the recently concluded meeting of the party’s Central Committee.¹¹

5 December

Brzezinski received a morning phone call from the DCI informing him (according to Brzezinski’s notes) that the CIA had just received “from a very reliable source” a report that “18 divisions will enter Poland Monday morning” (8 December). As Brzezinski recorded it, the DCI said that “the Polish General Staff is apparently debating whether to offer any national resistance.” Brzezinski immediately passed this information to the President, and then scheduled a meeting with Secretary of Defense Brown and Deputy Secretary of State Christopher for the following afternoon.¹²

This information on the planned intervention was from Kuklinski. He reported that at a meeting with the Soviet General Staff, the Deputy Chief of the Polish General Staff, General Hupalowski, had “in accordance with orders from General Jaruzelski’s Defense Ministry, endorsed a plan to admit into Poland (under the pretext of maneuvers)” military forces of the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia.¹³ According to Kuklinski, the forces were to consist of fifteen Soviet army divisions, two divisions from the Czechoslovak army, and one division from the East German army. The

11. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 4 December 1980; “Leaders in Poland Make Urgent Plea for End of Unrest,” *NYT*, 4 December 1980, A1; Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 63.

12. Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 38, and *Power and Principle*, 466.

13. The description here is taken from Kramer’s translation of Kuklinski’s original reporting cable, “Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 50.

operational plan envisaged that the intervening forces would first regroup at all major Polish army bases, ostensibly to conduct maneuvers with live ammunition (presumably to insure the support or neutralization of the Polish units there). The next step would be to seal off all major Polish cities. Four Polish divisions were to be brought into the operation "at a later point." Kuklinski said that "[a] state of readiness to cross the Polish border was set for 8 December."

Kuklinski's message did not at the time specify the date or place of the recent meeting where these maneuvers had been discussed, but analysts presumed (correctly, as would be later confirmed by Kuklinski) that it had taken place in Moscow on 1 December, the same time that the Warsaw Pact defense ministers were meeting in Bucharest. Kuklinski added that while everyone who had seen the plans—"a very restricted group"—was "crest-fallen . . . no one is even contemplating putting up active resistance" (contrary to the impression from the DCI's phone call). Kuklinski said there were even some individuals, including a Colonel Puchala who had accompanied the Polish Deputy Chief of Staff to the meeting in Moscow, who were saying that the presence of such enormous military forces on the territory of Poland might calm the situation.

This report seemed to mesh with the information that had been reported two days earlier indicating preparations for movement of Warsaw Pact forces into Poland under the cover of combined joint exercises. The 8 December date given in Kuklinski's message also matched the earlier report that the forces were to be ready to move sometime from 5 to 8 December, and that the closing of the East German border with Poland was to remain in effect through 9 December. What appeared to be further corroborative evidence was intelligence reporting that same morning that convoys of cargo vehicles had been observed moving through the Baltic region toward Kaliningrad, near the Polish border. Intelligence analysts said this might represent the start of a mobilization of motor transport units to support an invasion force.

The size of the forces described in the Kuklinski message, however, contrasted with an intelligence situation report issued the previous day. That report said evidence had been obtained on the status of eleven of twenty-five divisions in the western USSR that would be likely to provide the bulk of any Soviet invasion force, and mobilization had been carried out at only two of them.¹⁴

14. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NIDs* 4 and 5 December 1980.

Some hours after Turner's call to Brzezinski, a public communiqué from Moscow confirmed that an unannounced meeting of the Warsaw Pact political leaders (the "Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee") had taken place there that day. At the time little was known of what had transpired at the meeting. Rumors of such a session had been around for a few days, and the U.S. Embassy in Moscow had reported activities on 4 December suggesting some kind of high level meeting was about to occur.¹⁵

On first learning of this, CIA analysts tended to view it as another indicator of a potential crackdown on Solidarity, quite likely involving the introduction of Soviet military forces. A similar Moscow summit had preceded the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia. Coming on the heals of the Polish party's Central Committee meeting and the Warsaw Pact defense ministers' meeting in Bucharest, and with information that the political leaders' meeting in Moscow had been accompanied by senior military officials, even outside observers who were not privy to the reporting from Kuklinski assumed that the meeting in Moscow was focused not just on the situation in Poland but on the security aspects of that situation.

The communiqué issued that evening at the end of the Moscow summit, however, was interpreted by the CIA—and most Western observers—as indicating that the Soviets had decided to give the Poles more time to solve their own problems, under pressure of outside "assistance" if they failed to do so. The public statement expressed agreement by "meeting participants . . . that [the Poles] will be able to overcome the current difficulties and ensure the development of the country along a socialist path." At the same time it said that the Polish government "can firmly count on the fraternal solidarity and support of the Warsaw Treaty Organization states"—which was read to mean outside intervention.¹⁶

15. The Embassy report of the apparent "VIP" activities on the evening of 4 December is in declassified State Department cable, Moscow 19252, 12/5/80, at the National Security Archive. It is described in Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 60–61, and described in the chronology given in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

16. The communiqué appeared in *Pravda*, 6 December 1980. The portion of its text referring to Poland was printed in the *NYT*, 6 December 1980, A4. The common interpretations that the Soviets had decided to give the Poles more time can be seen in "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 6 December 1980, and "Soviet Bloc Nations Meet Unexpectedly in Moscow on Crisis in Poland," *NYT*, 6 December 1980, A1.

6 December

The intelligence situation report on Poland said there was “additional evidence of increased Soviet preparedness for an invasion.” Three Soviet divisions in the area of the East German town of Templin, near the northwestern Polish border, had been seen moving out of their garrisons, and vehicle staging camps had been set up. A Soviet airborne unit in the Baltic region of the USSR was seen loading equipment on air transport pallets, which would put it in position to move in a matter of hours. A mobile military hospital had been set up on the grounds of a large civilian hospital at Kaliningrad, which was close to Poland’s border.¹⁷

The meeting of top U.S. national security officials that Brzezinski had set up after hearing of the Kuklinski message took place that afternoon. It included Secretary of Defense Brown, DCI Turner, Deputy Secretary of State Christopher, and Joint Chiefs of Staff representative General Pustay. The discussion began with a briefing by Turner, who said that a Soviet military buildup east and west of Poland had been continuing, and that the CIA had *concluded* that the Soviets “*will* go into Poland on Monday or Tuesday” (emphasis added). Turner gave three central conclusions: (1) under the cover of an exercise, fifteen Soviet divisions, mainly from the western USSR, would move into Poland within the next forty-eight to seventy-two hours; (2) the Polish security forces would crack down on Solidarity; (3) the intervention would result in bloodshed.¹⁸

Turner’s briefing was followed by a discussion of the need to inform allied governments of the economic and political sanctions the United States was planning to impose on the USSR if the intervention occurred. Brzezinski said that the inadequacy of U.S. communications in this regard before the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan a year earlier had led to complaints from allied governments that they had not been brought in on U.S. planning.

Brzezinski raised the question of whether the United States should publicize the intelligence on the planned interventions “once we are confident it is accurate.” He also suggested that sending a message to the UN General Secretary, or calling a UN Security Council meeting, would at least alert Polish dissidents and trade unionists to take refuge. He said he believed the United States had a moral obligation to forewarn them “if we are fairly certain in our own minds that this is about to happen.” Brzezinski emphasized

17. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 6 December 1980.

18. Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 39–40.

that it was very important to avoid the kind of situation that occurred before Afghanistan, and to be as specific as possible with regard to the U.S. response to a Soviet intervention in Poland.

After some discussion, however, the meeting participants agreed with the recommendation of Brown and Christopher to hold off on any major action, because to some extent they were “still hesitant about the accuracy of the CIA analysis.” Brzezinski has said that he had his own doubts about the willingness of the Polish leadership to collude with the Soviets to the extent that was reflected in the reported plan. He also questioned the Polish regime’s ability to keep knowledge of such collusion from being leaked to the Polish population by individuals in the leadership who opposed it.

A number of intelligence analysts held similar reservations. The intelligence estimate of the size of the Soviet force that would be assembled for a military intervention in Poland was directly pegged to the premise that Moscow could not and would not count on Polish cooperation. This premise was in direct contradiction to the reports of Polish collaboration in constructing an “exercise” cover for moving Soviet and other East European troops into Poland, and Kuklinski’s statement that Polish military forces would actually participate in the action.

Moreover, the size of the force Kuklinski said was to be inserted into Poland was little more than half of what the Intelligence Community had estimated would be the most likely Soviet course of action. This by itself seemed to point to a greater level of Polish acquiescence if not outright collaboration than intelligence analysts had thought to be plausible. It was this skepticism regarding the level of Polish collusion, combined with the absence of convincing evidence of preparation of an intervention force large enough to quickly overwhelm the potential resistance capability of the Polish armed forces, that led many analysts to conclude privately that the imminence of the intervention was being overrated. Kuklinski’s earlier reporting that the Polish leadership had been for some months developing martial law plans had little impact on these calculations.¹⁹

Nonetheless, the proven reporting credentials of Kuklinski, combined with what appeared to be corroborating reports from other sources and

19. This description of analysts’ outlook is based on the author’s direct involvement in the deliberations at the time, and recent discussions with others that also were involved in producing the analysis. The author confesses to guilt in this regard. So long as one accepted the “Poles won’t shoot Poles” dictum, it was almost impossible not to look for the assembly of a force large enough to discourage and/or overwhelm the potential resistance. A force that had about a one-to-one ratio with the Polish army did not fit this description. At the end, our predictions that intervention was not about to occur were right for the wrong reasons.

preparations that had been detected in an admittedly limited number of Soviet units in the western USSR, made a strong case that intervention could well be imminent. The near block-out of much of the western USSR by cloud cover also forced the analysts to confront the possibility that they were seeing only a fraction of the force being readied.

Brzezinski called President Carter at Camp David in the evening of 6 December to report on his meeting with the other senior national security officials. He described to the President the latest intelligence relating to Soviet plans for intervention, but said the meeting participants recommended against briefing members of Congress or President-elect Reagan. This recommendation would also mean withholding any official public statement. Brzezinski's account of the phone conversation strongly implies that the President had problems with the recommendation. Brzezinski told him it was based on concern for causing needless panic and damaging the administration's credibility. The President said that he still wanted a meeting the next morning to discuss the matter.²⁰

7 December

The meeting convened at 9:00 A.M. in the White House cabinet room. In addition to the President and Brzezinski, it included Secretary of State Muskie and Deputy Secretary of State Christopher, Defense Secretary Brown, and DCI Turner. Brzezinski opened by summarizing for the President the intelligence and the three main points given in the DCI's brief the day before. According to Brzezinski's account of the meeting, this was followed by a prolonged discussion on whether to take the story to the public.²¹

The President was strongly in favor of doing so, according to Brzezinski. As the discussion progressed, Brzezinski also argued in favor of it. He describes Secretaries Muskie and Brown as continuing to express some reservations, but nonetheless inclined to support a public statement. A decision was reached to begin with a briefing of congressional leaders and follow it with a public statement and diplomatic initiatives, including a message to the UN Secretary General.

According to Brzezinski, while the discussions were taking place the DCI was called out to take a phone call. He returned at 9:34, according to Brzezinski's record, to say that the CIA had just received additional infor-

20. Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 40.

21. Ibid., 41-42.

mation that preparations for Soviet military intervention had been completed on 5 December, and that on that day a “joint decision” had been made to carry out the intervention. Turner said that the report indicated units were to enter Poland simultaneously from the USSR, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia as early as the next morning, or perhaps even that same evening. Allowing for the six-hour time zone difference with Poland, this would mean within the next eighteen hours, possibly the next six hours.

This report was roughly consistent with the scenario described in Kuklinski’s report received the day before, except that this most recent report seemed more certain that the decision for military intervention had definitely been made. The fact that a Warsaw Pact summit had taken place on the day that the report said the decision had been made presumably added to its credibility, even though the communiqué at the end of the summit had seemed conciliatory.

Brzezinski’s account does not explicitly indicate whether or to what extent the DCI’s interjection affected the discussions at the meeting. Nonetheless, what Brzezinski has described as the consensus decision at this meeting with the President was exactly the opposite of the consensus view reached by mostly the same people at the meeting late the previous afternoon. Certainly, the President’s views would have had a powerful impact on the discussion. The interjection of the new information, however, half an hour into what Brzezinski described as a “prolonged discussion,” would seem likely to have added to the case for actions that his advisors had been unwilling to take the previous day.

After a break of a couple of hours, the President and his National Security Council met again to review and approve the draft texts of the public statement and of the message to be sent to various heads of state and the UN Secretary General. Senior members of the Senate and House of Representatives joined the meeting and were given a detailed description of the evidence and of the actions to be taken.²²

Brzezinski led off by reading to the participants an Associated Press dispatch that had just been received through the wire system. It began with the words “The Soviet news agency TASS, in an unusual report Sunday, confirmed a joint Soviet-Polish military . . .” The wire transmission cut off

22. The afternoon meeting is described both by Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 42–43, and by Gates (who attended the meeting with the DCI) in *From the Shadows*, 167–68. The declassified official record of the discussions, “Special Coordination Committee Meeting and National Security Council Meeting, 7 December 1980,” is included in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

at that point. While staff worked to get the remainder of the text from the wire transmission, the partial text was, according to Brzezinski, considered by “everyone . . . to be a very important item of intelligence suggesting confirmation of the CIA’s analysis.” Indeed, it appeared to be the opening line in an announcement of the combined exercise that the recent reports had said would be the cover for introducing Soviet forces into Poland, and the timing was consistent with the reporting that this was to occur the following day, 8 December.

At the conclusion of this meeting a presidential message was sent simultaneously to allied governments including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Australia, and Japan, as well as to the Secretaries-General of NATO and the UN. It provided a summary of the intelligence that lay behind the President’s statement, saying that United States now had learned that:

the Soviet Union had made the decision to intervene with military force and that entry into Poland by a substantial Soviet force, possibly under the guise of a joint maneuver, may be imminent. This may be accompanied by widespread arrests by Polish security forces. We cannot be confident that this is the case, but the probability is sufficiently high that in my view Western nations should take whatever steps they can to affect Soviet decision-making and thus try to prevent the entry of Soviet forces into Poland.

Accordingly, I am issuing the following statement at 2:00 P.M. today Washington time. I trust that you will be able to issue similar statements soon. Such statements will demonstrate to the Soviets the resolve of the Western alliance and will serve to warn the Polish people of the serious nature of the current situation.²³

Promptly at 2:00 P.M. the White House released the following statement: “Preparations for possible Soviet intervention in Poland appear to have been completed. It is our hope that no such intervention will take place. The United States Government reiterates its statement of December 3, regarding the very adverse consequences for U.S.-Soviet relations of a Soviet military intervention in Poland.”²⁴

23. Attachment to the meeting record in *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*.

24. The statement is appended to “Russians Ready for Possible Move on Poland, U.S. Says,” *NYT*, 8 December 1980, A1.

The release of this statement was accompanied by a briefing to the press that provided additional details of the intelligence behind the President's statement. Front-page stories carried by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* the next day, attributed to "informed U.S. sources," described extensive movement of Soviet and Warsaw Pact military units; Soviet divisions out of garrison in the western military districts of the USSR; the call up of Soviet reservists; and the bringing to full readiness of command and communications facilities linking military headquarters in the USSR to other headquarters in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland itself.²⁵

By the time the press briefing was being given, CIA analysts had obtained the written text of the report that the DCI had described after receiving the phone call during the meeting with the President that morning. The analysts discovered that while the report did describe plans for a military intervention, it did *not* include a statement that "a joint decision to invade has been made." The DCI was informed of the error. There is no record of what was subsequently done to inform the policy officials.

A short while later, CIA analysts learned that the AP dispatch that seemed to confirm the plans for an exercise the next day was also erroneous. It was the result of a wire service computer error producing a retransmission of the 9 November announcement of exercises being faked as part of the effort to intimidate the Polish court decision on Solidarity's charter. The error in the transmission had been almost immediately detected by the wire service and cut off. The cut off in midsentence inadvertently led to the confusion as to what was being communicated. Brzezinski's notes show he also learned of this error, but do not state when he learned it.²⁶

Winding Down

Over the course of the next week, intelligence reports continued to characterize activities in Warsaw Pact military units around Poland as enhancing their readiness to mobilize and be deployed in minimal time if called upon to do so. The reports described Soviet divisions based in East Germany and Czechoslovakia being moved out of their garrisons. In the western USSR, the number of mobilized divisions appeared to have increased to four, and perhaps five, and some civilian vehicles appeared to have been

25. Ibid. See also "Concern Grows On Soviet Plans in Poland," *WP*, 8 December, A1.

26. Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 43.

called up to flesh out logistic support elements. Various maneuvers were also observed, which could have been exercises but also could have been positioning for further movement. A steady stream of briefings was provided to the press. The fervor appears to have generated some exaggerations, as exemplified by a 10 December story that five Soviet divisions were camped in tents on the Soviet-Polish border.²⁷

On 12 December, a NATO communiqué directed at Moscow announced that any violation of the “basic rights of any state to territorial integrity and independence” would result in the end of détente. The communiqué said any threat of intervention would force the NATO allies “to react in a manner which the gravity of this development would require.” That same day the *Wall Street Journal* carried a “leaked” account of senior U.S. officials discussing the possibility of economic measures against the USSR. This information had been provided by Brzezinski as a deliberate measure to let the Soviets know such steps were being contemplated.²⁸

By this time, however, the Intelligence Community had determined that some of the Soviet divisions that had been engaged in mobilization and exercises in the latter half of November were returning to their garrisons. Information also had been received reinforcing earlier intelligence interpretations that the Soviets, while maintaining their implied threat of military intervention if the Poles did not act decisively, had agreed at the Moscow summit to grant Polish leaders time to use their own means to put down the challenge.²⁹

27. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NIDs* of 8–13 December 1980. The stream of press briefings is reflected in “Russians Ready For Move, U.S. Says,” *NYT*, 8 December 1980, A1; “Moscow and Allies Activate Reservists; Invasion Fear Rises,” *NYT*, 9 December 1980, A1; and “Russian Forces Around Poland Term Ready,” *NYT*, 10 December 1980, A1.

28. Brzezinski, “White House Diary,” 47.

29. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 13 December 1980.

Chapter 4: Filling Out the Picture

In mid-December the weather conditions that had been impeding assessment of the status of most of the Soviet forces in the western USSR dissipated. Imagery obtained at that time showed that only three regular ground force divisions in the western USSR were fully mobilized—one each in the Baltic region, Belorussia, and the Carpathian area of Ukraine.¹ These were the same three divisions that had been observed mobilizing in the latter half of November. The airborne division in the Baltic region that had been seen in early December preparing for movement had stood down. (Airborne divisions were normally maintained at or near full manning and thus would not have required a notable influx of reservists.) The heightened alert conditions that had been observed in many of the military installations in the area in late November and early December had ended, and most components were in normal peacetime posture.

The CIA concluded that most of the Soviet divisions and support units in the western USSR had not undergone the mobilization required to bring them to full readiness for movement into Poland. The military preparations that had been observed over the preceding months were judged to have been contingency measures, undertaken in case it became necessary to carry out a full mobilization in response to a political decision to introduce forces into Poland.

Standard Soviet military procedures called for units facing the prospect of being ordered to full combat readiness to take preparatory steps to reduce the time required to complete the process if the orders were issued. These steps included establishment of command and communications centers, reconnaissance of dispersal areas, and in some cases partial mobilization. Such intermediate measures were particularly important for divisions

1. Except where otherwise noted, the intelligence described in this portion of the chapter is drawn from "Approaching the Brink: Moscow and the Polish Crisis, November–December 1980," dec. *Intelligence Memorandum*, December 1980. Another, less detailed presentation, is in "Poland's Prospects Over the Next Six Months," dec. *National Intelligence Estimate*, 12.6-81, January 1981, Document 38 in *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*.

normally kept at low peacetime manning levels. Most of the activities observed in Soviet units in the western USSR in October and November fell into this category of “intermediate” steps, and most of the divisions reported as taking such steps were in the category maintained at lowest peacetime manning.

In the CIA’s view these preparatory steps had brought overall military readiness to the point where a force of as many as twenty Warsaw Pact divisions could have been deployed into Poland within about a week of receiving a full mobilization order. The evidence also showed, however, that except for the three divisions previously identified, the order for full combat readiness—which would have entailed extensive activation of reservists—had not been given.

Skeptics could posit that the reservists and vehicles necessary to bring the Soviet intervention forces to full readiness had actually been called up, but had been returned to the civilian sector by the time the weather cleared (i.e., after only a week or so of active duty). The CIA acknowledged that this was physically possible but judged it as highly improbable, and it still seems so. As the CIA’s analysis at the time pointed out, once a brink was reached at which Soviet leaders were willing to bear the cost of such a large mobilization, there would have been strong resistance to immediately reversing it. At a minimum, having already borne the main cost of the call-up itself, it seemed implausible that the personnel would not have been kept at least through the normal reservist training period. Supporting this conclusion was the fact that the three divisions that had been seen mobilizing in late November were the same three that still had their reservists in the third week of December, when the rest of the forces in the western USSR were clearly not in a mobilized status.

All of which led CIA analysts to conclude that Soviet force preparations had not approached what would have been required if Moscow had been seriously preparing for the prospect of military intervention carried out without Polish cooperation. The CIA continued to hold the judgment that such an intervention would require a force of some thirty divisions. For this, even preparatory measures well short of full mobilization would still have greatly exceeded what had been observed, not only in the combat forces but in logistic and other support components as well.²

2. This judgment is articulated in a recently declassified CIA document originally disseminated 28 March 1981, “Poland: Warning of Intervention,” on deposit at the National Security Archive.

What CIA analysts believed the evidence did show was that Moscow had indeed been preparing to deploy at least some forces into Poland. In addition to the planning and preparations seen in the units themselves, the CIA pointed out that the Soviets had been detected conducting reconnaissance of movement routes and assembly areas in Poland. Also, a signal brigade and part of the General Staff auxiliary command center attached to the Soviet Group of Forces permanently based in Poland had been deployed to the field.

While acknowledging uncertainty as to how many troops Moscow actually intended to send in and what they would do once there, the CIA said that the USSR “presumably” intended to conduct an “exercise in Poland . . . to jolt the [Polish] principals in the crisis into realizing that [Moscow] meant business. The Soviets may also have been planning to use the Warsaw Pact troops, once in Poland, to back up a crackdown by Polish security forces.” The CIA assessment said Moscow’s intent apparently was to introduce the forces “in a highly visible manner and as ‘legitimately’ as possible, by obtaining an official invitation from the Kania regime and the cooperation of the Polish military authorities.”³

Earlier CIA assessments had postulated that the Soviets might engage in exercises on Polish territory as a means of coercing the Poles. The judgment that this may actually have been what the Soviets intended in December reflected both the reports from Kuklinski and other sources describing a greater than expected level of Polish collaboration, and the imagery revealing the limited amount of mobilization that had actually been carried out.

The CIA posited that the decision to defer even this more limited military action probably was not taken by the Soviet leadership until the day before the 5 December Warsaw Pact Summit in Moscow. The intelligence assessment said the Soviets appeared to have interpreted recent public and private statements by the Polish leaders (for example, on 3 December following their Central Committee meeting) as signaling that they recognized Moscow’s tolerance limit had been nearly reached and that they needed to take more assertive measures to counter Solidarity. The CIA said that the Soviets saw the Moscow summit itself as a mechanism for coercion, providing a forum to make it clear to the Poles that if they failed to act effectively, Warsaw Pact military “assistance” would be forthcoming.⁴

3. “Approaching the Brink,” 4–5.

4. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

Soviet and East European Records on Military Contingency Planning

Three documents from this time describing the forces slated to take part in the “maneuvers” in Poland are now available—two from the East German records and one from the Czechoslovak files. All three documents list the same East European forces that Kuklinski reported—one East German division, two Czech, and four Polish. The documents vary, however, in their descriptions of Soviet forces. One of the East German documents gives the same total reported by Kuklinski—fifteen.⁵ The other two documents describe the same Soviet forces that U.S. intelligence saw being readied at the beginning of December—four divisions from the western USSR, including one airborne division.⁶ The Czech document states that a fifth Soviet division—from the Soviet forces permanently based in Czechoslovakia—was also scheduled to participate in the first phase of the maneuvers in Poland. Preparations to commit this division would have been less visible to Western intelligence because Soviet divisions based in East Europe were maintained at full manning, and thus no reservist mobilization would have been required.

The different sets of figures may reflect a distinction between the full Soviet force prescribed in the contingency plans for implementing the crackdown, and the portion of the plan that was to be rehearsed in the December exercises. The two East European documents that refer to the four Soviet divisions from the western USSR explicitly state that the activity in which they were to engage was an exercise. Kuklinski, however, said in his public interview that he based his description of the intervention forces on information he had received from other military officers and “the registered blueprints of the final invasion plans taken from Soviet maps.”⁷ It seems likely that, given his role in martial law planning, the charts that he saw—and which are described in the one East German document—showed not

5. Michael Kubina, Manfred Wilke, and Reinhard Gutche, *Die SED-Feuerung und die Unterdrueckung der polnischen Oppositionsbewegung 1980/81* [The German Socialist Unity Party Leadership and the Suppression of the Polish Opposition Movement, 1980/81] (Cologne: Bundesinstitute fuer Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien, 1994), 30–31.

6. Michael Kubina and Manfred Wilke, *Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen: die SED contra Polen, 1980–81*,” [Tough and Uncompromising Crackdown: The German Socialist Unity Party Against Poland 1980–81], (Berlin: Academie Verlag, 1995) 134–37; and “Report of the Chief of the General Staff of the Czechoslovak Army, Colonel General Miroslav Blahnik, to Minister of National Defense, Army General Martin Dzur, 3 December 1980,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 67.

7. Kuklinski, “Suppression of Solidarity,” 82.

just the exercise but the full contingency plan for introducing external forces when the actual military crackdown was implemented.

This interpretation would be consistent with plans described in a document now available from Soviet archives, showing Moscow's contingency measures for mobilizing divisions in the western military districts of the USSR. On 25 August, less than two weeks after the beginning of the confrontation at Gdansk, the Soviet Party Central Committee established a commission charged with tracking developments in Poland and recommending courses of action. This commission was chaired by senior party ideologue Mikhail Suslov, and included Defense Minister Ustinov, KGB Chief Andropov, Foreign Minister Gromyko, Deputy Party Secretary Chernenko, "Information" Director Zamyatin, and various others.⁸ Three days after this commission was formed, it forwarded to the Central Committee a Ministry of Defense plan for preparing nine to eleven divisions in the western USSR military districts for possible commitment in Poland.⁹

Adding these divisions to the one division that the Czech document said was to be committed from the Soviet forces based there, and the two Soviet divisions permanently based in Poland would provide twelve to fourteen Soviet divisions for the Polish operation. As described above, intelligence in early December disclosed that there were also three Soviet divisions based in East Germany that appeared to be engaged in contingency preparations for movement, which would bring the total of Soviet divisions earmarked for commitment to Poland as high as seventeen.

According to the Suslov Commission plan, four of the divisions from the western USSR would be immediately brought to full combat readiness by requisitioning "from the national economy up to 25,000 reservists and 6,000 vehicles." The reason given for the urgency was the "tense" situation in Poland. The Ministry of Defense said that to be able to carry out their tasks "during the entry of these divisions into the territory of Poland" the divisions had to have received their combat manpower five to seven days before undertaking the operation. Contingency measures would be

8. "Extract from Protocol No. 210 of the Session of the CPSU CC Politburo on 25 August 1980," *CWIHP* 5 (spring 1995): 116.

9. The text of this Soviet Ministry of Defense mobilization request is presented in Kramer, "In Case Military Assistance is Provided to Poland," *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 102-9. The request noted that the initial 6,000 vehicles to be called up from the civilian economy included replacements for 3,000 military trucks that were normally kept with the divisions but which at the time had been detached to assist in the annual harvest.

taken to prepare the additional five to seven divisions for rapid activation "if the situation in Poland deteriorates further." This required preliminary steps for the call-up of as many as 75,000 additional reservists and another 9,000 vehicles from the civilian economy.

All of which is consistent with the indication in the East European documents of contingency measures for a two-phased implementation, with about four divisions initially being committed from the western USSR and the others readied for rapid deployment if the situation demanded. So long as the military crackdown was one in which the Poles were at least nominally taking the lead, Moscow would have had every reason to try to keep its forces as sparing as was possible while still ensuring the operation did not fall apart. The larger the Soviet contingent, the more difficult it would have been to deny it was an invasion rather than "fraternal assistance."

There has to date been no independent confirmation that the August mobilization of reservists and civilian vehicles for the four divisions called for in the Soviet Ministry of Defense memorandum was actually implemented, but the possibility cannot be ruled out. No description of such a mobilization appears in any of the U.S. intelligence documents declassified to date, although in the first part of September the CIA did report that some Soviet units appeared to be practicing mobilization, some of which involved civilian vehicles exercising with military units.¹⁰ The complete fleshing out of only a few divisions that had already been seen at least partially mobilized could have gone undetected for some time, particularly if the divisions did not fully deploy out of garrison. The weather problems would have compounded the difficulty in confirming full mobilization.

If the full mobilization had been carried out at the end of August, the reservists would have been released if the forces were not employed within about six weeks. Even this period would have exceeded the normal reservist tour of duty. An emergency situation would permit them to be kept on duty longer than the normal training period, but eventually they would have to be committed to operational engagement or released. The evidence clearly shows that the divisions slated for mobilization in response to the Soviet Ministry of Defense request in August were not the same ones that were seen to be fully mobilized in mid-December.¹¹

10. The declassified *NID* of 27 August 1980 does have a relatively large section under the heading of "Military Activity," but the text of the section is redacted.

11. The Ministry of Defense requested mobilization of three tank divisions and one motorized rifle division, and the number of reservists requested to carry this out and the short time span for the mobilization indicates most of these four divisions were from the higher peace-

It is now known that in mid-August the Polish leadership had established an Interior Ministry task force to begin preparations for a forceful suppression of the strikes and protests. The actions being readied by this task force, code-named “Lato ’80” (“Summer ’80”), included the storming of the Gdańsk Shipyard with the assistance of helicopters. By the end of August the Polish Interior Ministry task force believed it was ready, subject to a go-ahead from the party, to impose its crackdown, and the issue was being discussed at meetings of senior party officials. The Polish party backed down from the action at the last minute, reportedly because both Kania and Jaruzelski argued that Poland was not yet ready for such a step.¹²

Moscow was fully aware of these plans and the fact that they were being discussed at the highest echelon of the Polish party. On the face of it, it appears that the Soviets were at the time readying a few divisions in case it became necessary to rapidly deploy back-up forces, with contingencies for mobilizing an even larger force if the situation began to spin out of control. Within a day or so of the initial mobilization request, the Soviets would have been aware that the Polish crackdown had at a minimum been put off. They may, therefore, have eased off on the urgency of their own mobilization, while still going ahead with a “practice,” which may have been what U.S. Intelligence detected underway in September.

Regardless of whether that mobilization was actually completed, however, what is most significant about the August plan is the size of the force it was intended to prepare. Taken together with the descriptions in the East European documents and the U.S. intelligence on the actual force preparations that were undertaken later, it raises serious doubts that Moscow was at any time seriously contemplating the kind of overwhelming invasion that the Intelligence Community had estimated as the most likely course for

time readiness category. According to the CIA (“Approaching the Brink,” 2), the three divisions observed to have been mobilized in December were all motorized rifle divisions from the lowest peacetime readiness category.

12. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis, 1980–81*, translator’s note 2 attached to CPSU Politburo Protocol no. 213, 3 September 1980. The translator’s note ascribes its descriptions of the planning and debates over Lato ’80 to Zbigniew Włodek, ed., *Tanę Documenty Biura Politycznego: PZPR a “Solidarność” 1980–81* [Secret Documents of the Politburo: Polish United Workers Party versus Solidarity] (London: Aneks, 1992), 84–90, which presents the PZPR Central Committee Politburo meeting records for 15, 24–25, and 29 August 1980. Also Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs document of 29 August 80 (“Posiedzenie Sztabu MSW, 29.viii.1980”) in Polish archives (Archiwum Urzędu Ochrony Państwa). These events are also described in Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 62; Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 42–44, 51, and 461; Acherson, *Polish August*, 162. Dobbs notes that the files of the “Summer ’80” Task Force have now been published in Poland, in “Ekstra,” *I Życie Warszawy*, 12 May 1994, 1–3.

military intervention. The intelligence analysts' model for the intervention was based on the premise that the Soviets could not and would not count on the Polish leadership to actively support use of force, let alone impose it themselves. The Soviets, however, appear to have been developing their plans on the premise of just such Polish action. Their military preparations were apparently being shaped in terms of whether and how much backup they would have to provide to the Polish crackdown, not on the forces they would need to carry out the operation unilaterally.

Polish Military Involvement in December “Exercise” Planning

Kuklinski's 4 December message on the plans for moving Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces into Poland included what appears to have been a direct reference to the Polish leadership's involvement in the planning for those movements. As noted above, the message said that the Deputy Chief of the Polish General Staff had, "*in accordance with orders from General Jaruzelski's Defense Ministry, endorsed a plan*" to admit forces into Poland under the guise of an exercise (emphasis added).

Kuklinski has now had an opportunity to provide more details on this aspect. In responding to a question in his first public interview in 1987, he said that Jaruzelski had been engaged in discussions with the Soviets on the general outlines of the plan prior to the 1 December Moscow meeting of senior military officers where the detailed "blueprints" for the "exercise" were passed out. He said Jaruzelski had opposed the Soviet plan for maneuvers in Poland, arguing that both the timing and the inclusion of foreign troops (especially East German) would have an inflammatory effect on the volatile conditions in Poland. Jaruzelski insisted that if the Soviets could not be dissuaded from conducting the maneuvers, Polish forces needed to participate; they could not be seen by either the rank and file of the army or the populace as being shunted aside.

It was as a result of this argument, according to Kuklinski, that the exercise scenario given out at the Moscow meeting called for four Polish divisions to be brought into the operation. Kuklinski emphasized that the "blueprints" (apparently referring to charts or schematic maps) brought back from Moscow on 1 December confirmed "what had been known earlier from conversations between the Russians and Jaruzelski."¹³

13. Kuklinski, "Suppression of Solidarity," 82.

This contrasts with a general perception that at the beginning of December the Soviets unilaterally presented Jaruzelski with an “ultimatum” that “shocked” him into locking himself in his office.¹⁴ While Kuklinski does describe Jaruzelski’s depressed state and his seclusion in his office, he says this occurred on 30 November and 1 December, while Jaruzelski was awaiting the delivery of the detailed plans from Moscow.

Records of meetings of the Soviet leaders show that the main problem they perceived with the Polish leadership was not its political stance on the need to suppress the civil challenge, but rather its will to take the necessary action. This is reflected in the minutes of a Soviet Politburo meeting on 29 October, held for the specific purpose of reviewing the arguments and tactics that would be used in the next day’s scheduled “emergency” visit to Moscow by Polish Party Chief Kania and Prime Minister Pinkowski. Brezhnev, Ustinov, Gromyko, and Suslov all made remarks about Kania, Pinkowski, and Polish Defense Minister Jaruzelski being “reliable . . . committed . . . the best among the core” of the Polish party officials. Each of the favorable comments, however, was accompanied by remarks about the Polish leaders being “without resolve,” not “sufficiently strong,” and “at loose ends.”¹⁵

The records of this discussion clearly confirm the judgment of intelligence analysts at the time that the meeting with Polish leaders scheduled for the next day had been called for the specific purpose of galvanizing them to act. Brezhnev, Ustinov, and Gromyko all referred to the need for the Poles to impose martial law. Ustinov asserted that “if they do not introduce martial law the matter will become very complicated.” The back-up role of Soviet military forces was also alluded to by Ustinov, who said that there is a “good deal of vacillation” in the Polish army, but “we have prepared the Northern Group of Forces [the two Soviet divisions permanently based in Poland].” Concern about the Soviets being seen as the instigators of Polish use of force was implied in comments by Gromyko that martial law “doesn’t have to be done immediately, and particularly not right after their [Kania and Pinkowski] return from Moscow . . . but we should steer them to that. . . .”

Following the 30 October meeting with the Polish leaders, Brezhnev reported to the other Politburo members that Kania had said the Poles did indeed have a plan for martial law (“state of emergency”), that they “knew

14. For example, see Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 57.

15. “Session of the CPSU CC Politburo,” 29 October 1980, in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 2.

who should be arrested,” and that they knew “how to use the [Polish] army.” (This was about a week after the date on which Kuklinski has said the Polish task force began actually drafting the martial law implementation plans.) While characterizing the results of the discussions with the Polish leaders as positive, Brezhnev commented that Kania still seemed hesitant on the imposition of martial law. He described the Polish leaders as particularly anxious to “forestall hints that they were acting at the behest of Moscow.”¹⁶ All of this took place more than a month before the Moscow summit in December, and the issues clearly intensified during the interim.

The Warsaw Pact Summit in Moscow

Several accounts of what transpired at this meeting, including minutes and descriptions by official participants, have become available since the end of the cold war. The most detailed record so far available is the stenographic record of the East German delegation—virtually verbatim minutes of the meeting. A somewhat less detailed record was prepared by the Hungarian delegation.¹⁷ All of the accounts generally confirm the intelligence interpretation (and Western media descriptions) at the time.

The Polish leaders were indeed subjected to intense pressure to use their own forces to restore the party authority. Kania gave an extensive discourse asserting that the Poles agreed with the recommendations for a forceful crackdown, and were in the process of preparing to take the necessary steps. The threat of intervention by the other Warsaw Pact military forces seems more muted than was presumed at the time, however, coming across mainly in the atmosphere and “double entendres” (at least as presented by the record scribes). No mention appears of any plans for joint military maneuvers on Polish territory.

Kania described the Polish leadership group that had been established in August to manage the “emergency measures,” and he insisted that this

16. “Session of the CPSU CC Politburo,” 31 October 1980, in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 3.

17. Kubinka and Wilke, *Hart und Kompromisslos durchgreifen . . .*, 140–95. An English translation of large portions of this stenographic record, along with a somewhat more abbreviated report given by Hungarian party leader Janos Kadar to his own Central Committee following the Moscow summit, are in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*. The Kadar report was obtained by the Cold War International History Project from the Hungarian National Archives Department of Documents on the Hungarian Workers Party and on the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party. Both the German and Hungarian documents are in close agreement, the only difference being in Kadar’s version of what he personally said at the meeting and the order in which he spoke.

group was preparing specific steps. He also outlined plans for the arrest of the “most active functionaries of the counterrevolutionaries,” and the creation of “special groups of particularly trustworthy party members which, if necessary, can be armed.” Kania said some 19,000 such party members already had been selected and the number was expected to reach 30,000 by the end of the month.

Each of the other Warsaw Pact leaders emphasized that it was up to the Polish leadership to resolve the problems in Poland. There were specific urgings, for example by Todor Zhivkov of Bulgaria and Eric Honecker of East Germany, that the Polish armed forces and security forces be used to crush the civil resistance. The party leaders of Hungary (Janos Kadar) and Czechoslovakia (Gustav Husak) cited the previous crises in their own states as a means of impressing on the Poles the potential consequences of failing to take timely decisive action on their own. Brezhnev and Honecker stressed what they saw as the Polish leaders’ failure to follow through on the promises they had given at their meeting in Moscow at the end of October to draw a line on the concessions to Solidarity and to take more decisive action. The implication was that there was a limit to how many times such promises could be taken seriously, and that patience had its limits.

This plenary meeting was followed by a private session between Brezhnev and Kania. Personal descriptions given by participants in this meeting and in a parallel meeting between Ustinov and Jaruzelski provide the only references to discussions between the political leaders on the contemplated joint military maneuvers. Kania has said that Brezhnev, after obtaining promises that the Poles would use their forces to crush the Solidarity movement, said that the Soviets would not enter Poland. Brezhnev added, according to Kania, “if there are complications, we will go in.” The Soviet interpreter at the meeting has given much the same version, recalling Brezhnev as saying “okay, there will be no maneuvers. But if we see that they are overthrowing you we will go in.”¹⁸

One significant point on which the new information differs from the earlier interpretations concerns the circumstances under which the Moscow gathering was called. The CIA said in its December 1980 analysis that the Soviets “probably did not make the decision to defer military action *and to summon Pact leaders to Moscow until 4 December*” (emphasis added).¹⁹

18. Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 63–64, 462.

19. “Approaching the Brink,” 7. For other examples of the “surprise” and “sudden” characterizations, see Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 63; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 99; and “Soviet Bloc Nations Meet Unexpectedly,” *NYT*, 6 December 1980, A1.

Most accounts in the immediate aftermath described the meeting as “sudden,” and a “surprise,” and this is still a fairly widely held impression.

The information that is now available, however, shows that in the last week of November the planning for the meeting of the political leaders and the planning for the military maneuvers were taking place in parallel. East German archives have turned up a letter from Honecker to Brezhnev dated 26 November “proposing” that a meeting of Warsaw Pact party leaders be convened in Moscow. He recommended that it be held immediately after the meeting of the Polish Party Central Committee slated to take place from 1 to 3 December. In this letter Honecker said he was aware that Hungarian party leader Husak and Bulgarian party leader Zhivkov had already been making such proposals.²⁰ (By the rules of conduct among the Soviet bloc party leaders, unanimous recommendations from the East European party chiefs usually were in response to signals from Moscow that certain proposals would be welcomed.)

These plans for a “summit” meeting of Warsaw Pact party leaders were thus being discussed at the same time that Kuklinski has said Jaruzelski was involved in discussions of “joint maneuvers” with the Soviets. The East German records indicate that it was on 28 or 29 November that their military officials received the invitation to the 1 December Moscow session to go over the plans for joint maneuvers.²¹ The establishment of a temporary restricted area on the East German-Polish border was announced on 29 November. The reports that military preparations were to be completed by 8 December, and the fact that the restricted area on the border was to last through 9 December, suggests that the timing for the military maneuvers was directly linked to the timing and outcome of the high level political meeting being set up for the end of the first week of December.

Interpreting the Evidence

The evidence clearly shows that the Soviets had not readied a force of the order of magnitude the CIA had estimated they would prepare if they were to undertake an externally imposed military suppression of the Polish labor

20. “To the General Secretary of the CPSU CC, Comrade Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev,” *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*; and also in *CWIHP* 5 (spring 1995): 124.

21. Kuklinski’s comments are in “Suppression of Solidarity,” 82-83. On the dates of the East German actions, see Kubina and Wilke, *Hart und Komrpomisslos*, 134. The date on the East German General Staff Chief’s message to Moscow naming his representatives for the upcoming meeting is 29 November, indicating he had received his invitation on or before that date.

movement. At the same time, however, it does seem evident that they had prepared for the introduction of at least some forces into Poland. On balance, the evidence is fairly persuasive that—as was concluded in the retrospective intelligence assessment—Moscow was preparing a joint military exercise to be carried out on Polish territory as part of a pressure campaign to force the Poles to impose their own military crackdown. Brezhnev reportedly told Indian Prime Minister Gandhi in a meeting on 8 December that the Soviets had planned maneuvers but had “postponed” them because of objections raised by Polish leaders.²²

Moscow knew that the Polish leaders were actively preparing measures for martial law, but doubted their resolve to carry them out. For Soviet political leaders, the exercise would have been seen as a device to strengthen the incentives for the Poles. For Soviet military planners, it offered the additional benefit of rehearsing an operation they might be ordered to carry out if the threatening postures did not produce their desired results.

The extent to which Soviet political leaders were actually committed to carrying out the maneuvers remains unclear and may never be known (or knowable). The fact that the target date for bringing forces to full readiness was set for shortly after the planned political summit suggests that implementation of the maneuvers was still contingent on a final political decision expected to be made no sooner than the summit. The Czech Army Chief of Staff said in his report that at the 1 December meeting of top military officials in Moscow, the Soviet chairman of the meeting had declared “at the present time the exercise is merely prepared. Its execution, including the timing . . . will be determined by the political leadership.”²³

It is likely that the Polish leaders’ strong opposition to the maneuvers was driven by concerns that insertion of foreign forces on Polish territory—even if only for maneuvers—would make any efforts to organize an indigenous crackdown all the more difficult. It would galvanize the opposition and alienate some elements that might otherwise be willing to support use of Polish forces for crushing Solidarity. In effect, premature movement of “fraternal forces” into Poland stood a good chance of resulting in a self-created need for such assistance.

For Kania and Jaruzelski, ordering the use of force held considerable political risks under any circumstances, but the perception that they were acting as an instrument of Moscow would have been even more damaging.

22. “Approaching the Brink,” 5.

23. “Report of the Chief of Staff of the Czechoslovak Army Colonel General Miroslav Blahnik, to Minister of National Defense, Army General Martin Dzur, 3 December 1980,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 67.

It would have undermined whatever hopes they had of portraying themselves as acting in Poland's best interests by implementing the lesser evil, which is the justification Jaruzelski ultimately would give for the implementation of martial law that took place a year later. As noted above, Gromyko alluded to this in the 29 October meeting of the Soviet Politburo and Brezhnev indicated that it had come up in his 30 October discussions with Kania.

A major catalyst in the preparations for the military maneuvers and the political pressures that led up to the Moscow denouement appears to have been the brokered Polish Supreme Court ruling on 10 November. Soviet bloc leaders viewed this as the very kind of capitulation to Solidarity Kania had vowed to Brezhnev barely a week earlier that he would not permit. Both Brezhnev and Honecker cited this in their statements at the 5 December Moscow summit. They said their understanding of the meeting that had taken place between Kania and Brezhnev at the end of October had been that the Poles agreed, in Brezhnev's words, "that there was no room for retreat." Both characterized the ensuing events, particularly the Supreme Court action, as a broken promise—in Honecker's words, "a major setback."²⁴

The CIA's reporting shows that two of the three divisions observed at full readiness in mid-December had begun their mobilization within about a week of the Supreme Court action. By the latter part of the month, discussions were underway between Jaruzelski and the Soviets on the plans for joint maneuvers to be held in Poland in early December. On 26 November, the same date as the Honecker letter proposing a summit of political leaders in Moscow, the Polish Politburo stepped up its martial law preparations. Kania directed that draft legislation for a "state of emergency" be prepared for submission to the Polish parliament (the Sejm), and that unilateral government decrees banning strikes and assemblies and tightening censorship also be drawn up.²⁵

This was at the height of the Narozeniak affair—the same day that Solidarity's Warsaw chapter set the date for a regional general strike and the union's National Coordinating Commission announced its endorsement of the Warsaw chapter's position. The martial law actions taken by

24. Kubina and Wilke, *Hart und kompromisslos durschreifen*, 166–67, for Honecker's remarks, and 188, 191, for Brezhnev's remarks.

25. The Polish Politburo minutes are in PZPR Protocol 51, 26 November 1980, described in the chronology included in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*. The text is in Wlodek, *Tanje Documenty*, 180–88.

the party Politburo can plausibly be attributed to the acute political crisis. At the same time, however, Jaruzelski's discussions with the Soviets concerning military maneuvers clearly would have added to the motivation of Polish leaders to demonstrate willingness to take aggressive measures on their own.

The East Germans received a report on the Polish leaders' martial law initiatives on 28 November, from their military attaché in Warsaw, who said he had gotten the information the previous day. The KGB would have been at least as well informed. Kuklinski has in fact reported that Moscow was kept abreast of all the martial law planning. By 29 November the East Germans had received their invitations to Moscow to discuss the finished plans for the military maneuvers, and cabled back their acknowledgment.²⁶ (The same was probably true for the senior military officers of other Warsaw Pact states but documents are not available.)

Two days after that, on 1–2 December, the Polish Central Committee meeting took place, and at the same time Polish military officers were delivering the detailed plans for the maneuvers being set up by Moscow. The desire to persuade Moscow to defer these maneuvers was presumably a major factor in the strong public statements issued by the Polish party and the Polish Military Council of the Defense Ministry immediately after the party's Central Committee meeting. For the Military Council to make any public statement was itself of noteworthy rarity.²⁷

Polish Politburo member Olszowski flew to Moscow the night before the summit convened, presumably to lay the groundwork for the arguments that Kania and Jaruzelski would present when they arrived the next day. As noted above, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow reported signs of high-level meetings taking place on the eve of the summit. Normal Soviet bloc practice would have called for the Summit session itself to be scripted in accordance with preparatory discussions. Olszowski's credentials as a hard-liner favoring a crackdown would have added credibility to the assurances Kania would give the next day regarding the Polish leadership's intention ultimately to impose a crackdown on Solidarity.

In sum, by the time of the Moscow meeting the Soviets had received a variety of indications that their pressures on the Polish leadership had begun

26. The military attaché report is described in Kubina, Wilke, and Gutche, *Die SED-Führerung*, 124.

27. "Leaders in Poland Make Urgent Plea for End of Unrest," *NYT*, 4 December 1980, A1; Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 63; "Approaching the Brink," 7; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 95.

to show results. The Soviets apparently concluded that while they would need to continue to exert pressure on the Poles to implement the martial law measures, they could for the time being accede to the Polish protestations for more time, and defer the potential costs and risks that would have accompanied movement of forces into Poland—even if only for an exercise. In what turned out to be an accurate forecast, the CIA said that Polish acquiescence—however grudging—in the exercise that had been planned for December would have given the Soviets grounds for believing they could revive the exercise proposal at a later date if it proved necessary. This is exactly what they did try to do three months later.²⁸

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the preparatory deployments of various headquarters and communications elements they had already carried out, the Soviet military on 8 December went ahead with a command-staff and communications exercise. This provided a means for rehearsing at least a part of their plan, and it was extended through the first quarter of the next year to present a continuing reminder to the Polish leadership.²⁹

Alternative Readings

The possibility cannot be ruled out that the Soviets were intending to use the Warsaw Pact troops, once in Poland, to support a crackdown on Solidarity. The CIA made this point in its retrospective analysis. The evidence suggests that during the initial stages of military preparations (about mid-November) the ultimate mission may have been left open, with plans for deployment of the larger Soviet force of fifteen divisions worked out and coordinated on the understanding that, depending on how political events played out, they could be scaled back to an exercise,

The only step needed in December to bring the Soviet forces up to the fifteen division level reported by Kuklinski was implementation of the mobilization that had been prepared by the Soviet Ministry of Defense plan submitted in August. As had been reported by the CIA, and as is indicated by the text of that plan now available, the Soviets had undertaken preparatory measures to enable this mobilization to be carried out in a few days. But there seems no reason why the Soviet military planners would have left

28. “Approaching the Brink,” 7.

29. See Ustinov’s remarks in the record of CPSU CC Politburo Meeting of 22 January 1981, in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 8, and translator’s note 102 giving the background of those remarks.

themselves dependent on a crash mobilization if they had time to be fully prepared, which the evidence shows they clearly did.

Moreover, if the Polish leaders were uncertain at that time of their ability to deal with the volatility of maneuvers, they almost certainly would not have been able—even if they had wanted to—to assure Moscow of the military cooperation that formed the basis for the Soviet intervention plan. Conversely, the Soviets had ample evidence that use of their own forces could be minimized if not avoided altogether if the Poles could be pushed into executing the martial law plans the Soviets knew were being prepared. In view of the indications that their pressures on Polish leaders to take their own forceful measures seemed to be working, the Soviets would have had good reason to avoid committing their force in a risky venture until they had better prepared the playing field.

At the time of the 5 December meeting in Moscow, Brezhnev was already scheduled for a state visit to India beginning three days later, on 8 December. A joint exercise in Poland would not cause any significant problems during such a trip. It is highly questionable, however, whether the Soviet leader would have subjected himself to a media covered event in a foreign capital outside the Warsaw Pact at the same time Soviet military forces were participating in the use of force to crush a workers' movement. He almost certainly would have had to confront accusations of an "invasion." At a minimum, this schedule would indicate that if anything more than "maneuvers" was planned it was not slated to take place until sometime later.

An alternative at the opposite end of the spectrum is that the Soviets had no intention of carrying out even an exercise on Polish territory, and that the preparations were merely a bluff as part of the coercion. Part of the difficulty in ruling this out is that any evidence that would seem to support the argument that the exercise was really intended can be explained as a successfully implemented part of the deception conspiracy.

Had the Soviets been engaged only in a bluff, however, they could have mounted a more threatening posture by deploying more divisions out of garrison, without adding the cost of actually calling up the full complement of reservists for any one division. Conversely, many of the preparations they did take—such as setting up command structures and preliminary steps in the logistics chain—were of a nature that would not have been readily apparent to the Poles without access to the same kinds of technical collection available to the United States. These measures were mainly used for the command-staff and communications exercise that did take place on 8 December.

One argument that has been offered is that the Soviets deliberately undertook such less-apparent preparatory measures in the expectation that the United States would detect them and warn the Poles, thus lending credibility to the threat. Soviet “disinformation” practices lend some plausibility to this argument, but given the U.S. record with Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviets would have had reason to be uncertain whether the United States would warn the Poles or simply protest to Moscow through diplomatic channels. (The justification for such uncertainty would be amply demonstrated a year later.)

Chapter 5: Intelligence and Policy

If Moscow had in fact intended to carry out some military action in December 1980—whether an exercise or something more—the evidence now available leaves little doubt that it had been called off by the end of the Moscow summit and probably sooner. This means that, taking account of the time zone differences, it had already been called off by the time Brzezinski received Turner’s call describing the plan reported by Kuklinski.¹ The White House meetings over the following weekend, the President’s diplomatic communiqûes and public statement, and the associated White House press briefings were after the fact. The possible impact of the actions taken in Washington a few days earlier cannot be dismissed, but any attempt to evaluate this is impeded by the uncertainties regarding what was really planned and the motivations of the participants in the Moscow Summit.

That said, it is hard to find fault with the vigorous actions taken by the U.S. administration. The ambiguity that continues to exist nearly two decades later illustrates forcefully the uncertainties that were confronted in assessing and forecasting the dynamics of the situation at the time.

The record of the meeting of President Carter and his national security advisors on 7 December describes the President’s summation of the discussion as “[W]e did not know whether the Soviets would go in. Our first goal is to keep them out.” The text of the President’s letter dispatched to Allied leaders following that meeting said that “[W]e cannot be confident that [intervention is in fact intended, but] . . . the probability is sufficiently high that in my view Western nations should take whatever steps they can to affect Soviet decision making.”² A phrase that could have been added and that was clearly implicit would have been “and the stakes are sufficiently high.”

1. The East German stenographic record (Kubina and Wilke, *Hart und kompromisslos*, 195) says the 5 December meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders concluded at 1530 Moscow time, which would have been 0730 EST. Brzezinski has said (“White House Diary,” 38) that he received the call from Turner describing the Kuklinski report at 0910 that day.

2. “Special Coordination Committee and National Security Council Meeting,” 7 December 1980, *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

With this principle as a basis for action, the administration's moves were clearly merited by the available intelligence. The United States had received, from one of its most well placed and proven human source assets of the entire cold war, a report that strongly indicated military intervention was about to occur. Intelligence analysts also had been seeing indications for some time that the Soviets were at a minimum increasing their readiness for such a contingency. As has been described by Bob Gates, much of the western USSR was obscured by bad weather conditions during the critical time frame in late November and early December. Analysts were thus confronted with the problem that the small amount of force preparations they could confirm might be the tip of a much larger iceberg.

All of this was taking place just one year after the Soviets had intervened militarily in Afghanistan. This factor gets at most only passing reference in the various meeting records, but its influence on the intelligence components' tendency to lean towards the worse case and on the aggressive approach taken by the policy officials cannot be discounted. There was a clear inclination among senior intelligence officials to "err on the high side."

If there is an aspect of the policy that might be vulnerable to criticism it is not the actions taken but rather that those actions were taken fairly late in the game and then only after the receipt of intelligence that seemed to indicate the intervention was virtually certain. At their meeting on the afternoon of 6 December, the U.S. officials possessed information that, if true, meant the challenge they faced was not in deterring a decision being contemplated, but in attempting to reverse a decision that had already been made. According to the DCI's briefing at the outset of the meeting, the Soviet forces would be ready to carry out the operation within forty-eight hours, and he had previously said the plan called for Soviet forces to enter Poland as early as the next thirty-six hours.³ This information had been preceded by months of clear indications that the forces had been increasing their preparedness for just such an action.

Nonetheless, the participants concluded their meeting by agreeing to recommend to the President that no action be taken until they were "fairly certain in their own minds that this was about to happen."⁴ According to

3. In informing Brzezinski of the report from Kuklinski, Turner had said the Soviet troops were to enter Poland on "Monday morning" (8 December). Allowing for the six-hour time difference between Washington and Warsaw, this would have been a few hours after midnight Washington time on the 8th. The 6 December meeting in Washington began at 1600, according to Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 39.

4. Brzezinski, "White House Diary," 40.

Brzezinski's account, the participants in the meeting had uncertainties about the accuracy of the intelligence, and their skepticism was most pronounced on the reporting that indicated Polish collusion in the intervention. By the time the President's letter to Allied leaders was sent the following afternoon and his public statement was released, it was 10 o'clock in the evening in Warsaw, the night before the Soviet forces reportedly were to enter Poland. By then, if the reporting was correct, the intervention units probably would have been deploying toward the border. Even the relatively late U.S. public and diplomatic actions appear to have required the direct intervention of the President. These were buttressed by late breaking information from the DCI and a wire service report that seemed to leave little room to doubt that Soviet forces were to enter Poland on the morning of 8 December. (Both pieces of information, as described above, turned out to be misrepresented.)

All of this demonstrates that the declared principle of "not certain but enough evidence to warrant action" can be difficult to implement in practice. As illustrated in the account of the meeting on 6 December, those responsible for policy decisions have an understandable reluctance to act until they are "fairly certain." Intelligence producers face the challenge of forecasting decisions by foreign players before those decisions have been made, and usually when the players are themselves not certain what their decisions will be.

Waiting for certainty, however, essentially requires waiting until a decision has been made, and reversing decisions is much more difficult than influencing them beforehand. Once the players become certain, the policy question usually moves from prevention to reaction. To adapt a metaphor, if certainty requires a "smoking pistol," it means waiting until the "bullet" has been fired. This is a systemic tension between intelligence and policy that cannot be eliminated but only managed. There is no single formula for achieving this, but a fundamental ingredient is the explicit recognition and continuing consciousness of its potential impact on the effectiveness of intelligence in supporting policy. The danger for the intelligence producers is that it causes them to become fixed on a "bottom line," and to narrow the analytic options.

The critical role played by intelligence in generating the vigorous U.S. diplomatic and public policy measures on the Polish situation was manifest from the early stages of the civil turmoil there. Declassified White House documents show that the meeting on 23 September to develop responses to a potential Soviet intervention was prompted by intelligence reporting.

Brzezinski's notes describe his actions and the President's initiatives in the first few days of December as responses to the picture unfolding in the daily intelligence reports and the *Alert Memoranda* from the DCI. The spurt of meetings and escalation of the administration's offensive on the weekend of 6–7 December were a direct result of the pivotal report from the CIA's crucial human asset in Poland.

The virtual certainty with which the intervention was portrayed in the late stages of the developments can be justifiably criticized. To some degree, however, this was the flip side of the problem of the policy arm's reluctance to act in the face of ambiguous evidence. In this case, the record raises a legitimate question of whether the administration would have acted as forcefully as it did without such expressions of certainty from intelligence. It is likely that to some extent the intelligence officials were reacting to the criticism that had been leveled at the Intelligence Community for equivocating on warnings of a Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

The analysis itself can be faulted for the extent to which it was dominated by a single underlying premise—that Polish leaders would not be willing or able to impose force on their own, and would not cooperate with, and in fact quite likely would actively combat, a Soviet imposition of force. As a consequence, the threshold of Soviet military preparations that the analysts were looking for as physical indications of a looming military crackdown—however triggered—far exceeded what the Soviets appear to have been actually contemplating. This put the analysts at risk of misinterpreting the signs of what was actually being prepared, and may have contributed to the perspective that led policy officials at the 6 December to defer prominent public actions. The military intervention plan reported by the DCI indicated a greater willingness by Polish leaders to collaborate in the intervention than virtually all previous intelligence assessments had said was likely. Brzezinski has explicitly said that this was one reason the participants in the 6 December White House meeting were reluctant to act until they could get corroborating evidence.

Under any circumstances, it would have been much more difficult, solely on the basis of physical evidence, to interpret preparations for the kind of collaborative imposition of force described by Kuklinski than for an intervention along the lines posited in intelligence assessments. By comparison, the mobilization of some thirty divisions and commensurate logistical support would be a fairly unambiguous indication that a military operation was intended. This is what led to the DCI's initial estimate that the Intelligence Community would be able to give about two to three weeks' warning of a

Soviet intervention. Detection of only a few mobilized divisions, on the other hand, especially in the western USSR where they would constitute only a small fraction of the divisions based in the region, would be subject to a range of interpretations. Examples would include call-up of reservists for their annual training, or perhaps contingency measures for commitment of a large force in response to a future decision yet to be made. This was in fact how the observed preparations were being interpreted prior to the receipt of information that a different scenario could well be in the offing. Under these circumstances, tactical warning would have been a more uncertain prospect.

Once a hierarchy of expectations becomes an analytic framework, it tends to narrow the use of empirical evidence. In describing the limited mobilization and scant logistic preparations observed in the western USSR by 1 December, the CIA said “available evidence does not yet suggest that the extensive mobilization and logistics buildup that would be needed to support a *large scale invasion* has been initiated.” This report also said that the measures that had been completed would make it possible “*under urgent circumstances* [to] carry out their final preparations [for such an invasion] in less than a week” (emphasis added).⁵ The report did *not* go on to state that the preparations *had* put the Soviets in position, if they obtained Polish cooperation, to immediately move a few divisions into Poland for a joint imposition of force. The assessment of the readiness posture of the Soviet forces was given in terms of what had already been judged as the most likely course of action, and was not extended to the question of whether that judgment was valid in light of the latest evidence.

This trap is not unique to intelligence; it is inherent to all fields of analysis.⁶ The “key premise” vulnerability is particularly acute when the premise deals with perceptions and future decisions of political leaders, in this case the views of Polish leaders on the use of force and the decisions they would make in future situations. This is a process of judging what decision a player will make before that player has made the decision. It normally means relying on inferentially developed assumptions. The principal danger comes from the too frequently demonstrated tendency to allow such assumptions to evolve into the “givens” of day-to-day analysis of incoming information.

5. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. NID, 1 December 1980.

6. An exceptional contribution to efforts of intelligence officials to understand how this and other aspects of human intellectual processing of information can impede effective analysis is a recent work by Richards J. Heuer Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, published by CIA’s Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999.

The inherence of the “key premise” hazard means it can’t be avoided, only contained. In practice, this means explicitly highlighting the premise or premises that bind together the analytic equations, and the potential impact that a change in one of these premises could have on the overall conclusions. Making these factors an explicit part of the analytic product can help focus collection on those key premises upon which the analysis rests most heavily, and raise sensitivity to any contradictory information.

In the case of Poland in the latter months of 1980, the premise that the Polish leadership probably would not employ force or cooperate with the Soviets in the use of force was so central to the outcome that it clearly warranted continuous scrutiny. As is often the case, one reason it did not get more attention was probably the fact that it was so widely shared. As the meeting records indicate, the same view was held by a majority of the policy officials dealing with the problem, and it was also the view of many other Western experts.⁷

Equally important was the judgment that even if some Polish leaders were willing to cooperate in the imposition of force, any effort to do so would encounter strong resistance and a major Soviet intervention would ultimately be needed in any event. The information now available shows that this judgment may well have been *initially* correct. As their own records show, both the Soviet and Polish leaders were concerned about how the Polish army might react to any use of force against Solidarity. They clearly shared the U.S. intelligence analysts’ view that some segments of the Polish army might well rebel against the use of force against Solidarity, and that there was a real risk of some soldiers actually joining Solidarity in active resistance.⁸ It was to deal with this problem that Moscow was pressing its offers of military backup.

But in offering this military backup, the Soviets were proceeding more in line with the interpretation that Brzezinski had outlined to the DCI on 30 October—that the Polish military would only offer organized resistance if directed from the top, and the Soviets apparently believed they had or could get collaboration from the top. The records of meetings of Soviet leaders show that the Polish leaders’ willingness to at least develop plans for instituting martial law was the central factor in Soviet planning. These

7. See “Meeting on Poland, Summary and Conclusions, SCC Meeting, Tuesday, September 23, 1980,” in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*. Also Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 69.

8. See, for example, the records of CPSU Politburo discussions on 3 September 1980, including translator’s note 9, and 29 October 1980, with translator’s note 16, in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*.

records show that Moscow still believed in the potential for its preferred option of having the Poles carry out their own suppressive action, and the Polish leadership was giving signs that would have led Moscow to continue to pursue this course.

The main contention between the Soviet and Polish political leaders was not over whether there was justification for a forceful suppression, but whether the Poles would be willing to carry it out, when, under what circumstances, and what role if any there would be for Soviet backup forces. As Kuklinski has described, this was a major point of contention between the Polish and Soviet officials in their exercise planning in late November, and in the decision to “postpone” the maneuvers in December.⁹

The approach of the Polish leadership to the use of force was central to all interpretations of the physical evidence and to any ability to anticipate the form that a Soviet military intervention might take. The belief that the Poles would not or could not collaborate led to the belief that military suppression would be presaged by a mobilization of a thirty-division Soviet invasion force. The stance of the Polish regime on the use of force was also central to the formulation of U.S. policy initiatives for deterring the action that might occur. This view continued to dominate assessments even though the CIA had received information that indicated its key conclusion regarding the willingness of Polish leaders to support the use of force was quite possibly in error—that martial law plans were being developed under the supervision of several members of the top Polish leadership, including the Prime Minister and a Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, the Chief of Staff of the Polish armed forces, and the Minister of Internal Affairs. This was a clear difference from the 1968 “Prague Spring,” where the Czechoslovakia party leadership led the liberalization movement.

The apparent lack of more vigorous efforts to probe this question, especially given the exceptional access the CIA had to the internal workings of the military authorities, clearly was a shortcoming of the intelligence analysis process during this period. As events played out, this shortcoming probably had little effect on the outcome of the events at the time. This would not be the case in the events that ensued a year later.

Finally, all of this also demonstrates the complementary nature of the diverse sources of intelligence information. Throughout the weeks and

9. Records of the CPSU Politburo Discussions on 13 September 1980, translator’s note 12, and 29 October 1980, in *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*; also Kuklinski, “Suppression of Solidarity,” in Kostrzewska, *Between East and West*, 82–83.

months leading up to the U.S. policy offensive in December, the interpretation of observed, physical evidence was shaped by beliefs regarding perceptions and intentions of Polish and Soviet leaders. It is hard to get photos of what is inside the heads of people. In theory, intentions can be inferred from physical actions. In practice, however, the process is too often reversed—the actions are interpreted on the basis of existing beliefs about intentions. Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that getting inside human thought processes is best done by a human source, with the caveat that this can vary widely depending on the specific human sources available. A small amount of accurate information from a reliable, credible human source can be a major factor in the ability to interpret a massive amount of physical evidence.

This impact is illustrated in the CIA assessments after mid-December. After acquiring persuasive human source information showing more Polish willingness to cooperate in the imposition of force than had been previously assumed, the CIA interpretation of the physical evidence was a very close fit with what later information has shown to have actually been intended and contemplated. Physical preparations that were assessed in CIA reporting of 1 December in terms of their implications for readiness of a large-scale intervention were interpreted in a later assessment as indications that the Soviets had prepared to carry out an exercise with Polish cooperation. The same physical preparations were also seen as indicating the possibility that the operation may have been intended as a Polish-implemented, Soviet-backed imposition of force, a scenario which had been until then treated as highly unlikely.

Part II: The Brink of Military
Intervention, January-April 1981

Chapter 6: Escalating Challenges to the Polish Regime

The 5 December meeting of the Warsaw Pact party chiefs in Moscow had a sobering impact on Solidarity's national leadership. The circumstances of the meeting itself and the public alarms sounded in the West conveyed a clear warning that the union had pushed party authorities both in Warsaw and in Moscow closer to the brink of some form of draconian measures. On the day of the Moscow summit meeting, Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission issued a statement pointing out that there were no strikes in Poland and asserting that none were planned. Polish party officials responded shortly after their return from Moscow with an appeal for restraint, and declared a willingness to negotiate and seek compromise. In a manifest effort to portray an atmosphere of truce, party and government officials appeared jointly with Solidarity leaders and church representatives at a 16 December ceremony to commemorate the 1970 shootings at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk.

On the surface this seemed to signal a respite from confrontation and offered at least the possibility of some kind of accommodation between the growing civil movement and the Polish party. The underlying volatility of the situation, however, became quickly evident in confrontations that erupted on two major issues within a month of the Moscow summit. One was the effort by private farmers to organize and legally register their own independent union modeled after the factory workers' Solidarity, which dramatically expanded the civil opposition movement. The other was Solidarity's demand for work-free Saturdays and a five-day workweek, and was part of the continuing struggle over implementation of the provisions of the agreements reached in the strike settlements at the end of the previous summer.

A Farmers' Gdansk¹

The confrontation with the private farmers had been percolating for a long time. In the fall of 1978, three "Farmers Self-Defense Committees" had

1. An extensive description of the conflict over formation of the independent farmers

been set up with the assistance of (and on the model of) the Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR), the organization of dissident intellectuals created in 1976 to support the factory workers' movement. After the emergence of Solidarity in September 1980, a group from the Farmers Self-Defense Committees sought to set up a parallel farmers union under the title "Rural Solidarity." Similar farmers unions were piloted under the titles "Peasants Solidarity" and "Union of Agricultural Producers Solidarity." Their fundamental objectives were recognition of private farming as a lasting part of the national economy, and legal protection of inheritance of land.

On 24 September 1980, the same day that Solidarity submitted its documents to the Warsaw Provincial Court for formal registration as an "Independent Self-Governing Trade Union" (NSZZ), the private farmers submitted their own papers for registration as "NSZZ—Rural Solidarity." At the end of October, the Warsaw Court ruled that private farmers were "self-employed" and thus not entitled to organize as a labor union. Like the factory workers of Solidarity, the farmers appealed this ruling to the Polish Supreme Court.²

The factory workers lined up in support of the farmers. Walesa had attended the court session at which the Warsaw Provincial Court issued its ruling against registration of the farmers' union. When Solidarity threatened a nationwide strike in the struggle over its own legal registration, it included in its list of demands the formal registration of Rural Solidarity.

On 14 December, while the farmers were waiting for the ruling on their Supreme Court appeal, they went ahead with an all-Poland founding congress for their independent union. One thousand delegates claiming to represent 600,000 private farmers met in Warsaw to establish Rural Solidarity. They called for formal registration as an independent union, guarantees for private ownership with rights for sales and purchases of land, an end to subsidies to the state agricultural sector, increased pensions for private

union is given in Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 110–34. Mr. Garton Ash "camped in" with the protesters for a period, and in the third chapter of his book he gives an intimate account of events. He notes (112) that the stronghold of independent farmers in southeast Poland was the result of efforts by the Polish Communists after World War II to buy the allegiance of farmers in what had once been Austrian-ruled Galicia. This involved redistributing some 15 million acres of land in private plots averaging about 12 acres. Other, less intimate but informative treatments are Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 105–7; and Peter Raina, *Poland, 1981: Toward Social Renewal* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), 57–59.

2. Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 56, gives the date of the court "ruling" as 29 October. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 111, gives the date of the court "hearing" as 22 October.

farmers, an end to press censorship, and restoration of a religious curriculum in state schools.³

The day after Christmas, a group of farmers occupied a public building in Ustrzyli Dolne (in the southeast corner of Poland near the border with Ukraine) to protest the diversion of roughly 150,000 acres and large monetary sums to a resort there reserved for party functionaries.⁴ A few days after that, farmers' delegates gathered again in Warsaw for what was scheduled to be the long awaited Supreme Court ruling on the registration of their union. On 30 December, however, the court again postponed it on a flimsy pretext.

Three days later a group of independent farmers and workers in Rzeszow, also in the southeastern corner of Poland about 60 miles above Ustrzyli Dolne, occupied the headquarters of the government-sanctioned provincial trade union. Their initial purpose was to protest the government's presumptive appropriation of the funds of what was by then a defunct government union. In a sequence reminiscent of the events at the Gdansk shipyard five months earlier, a protest initially directed at a local issue was quickly transformed into a confrontation with civil and political implications at the national level.

Almost immediately after the protesters in Rzeszow began their occupation, they demanded the registration of the independent farmers union Rural Solidarity. In the ensuing two weeks their list of demands was expanded to include the return of state requisitioned land to private hands, guarantees of private ownership and inheritance of property, access to fuel, machinery, building materials, and improvement grants that were then being exclusively channeled to the public sector, free elections to self-governing organizations at the local level, permission for school children to choose what languages they would study (e.g., English, German, or French, rather than mandatory Russian), and truthful history books. One observer on the scene has described the events at Rzeszow as the farmers' "Lenin Shipyard," with farmers there seeking a "Gdansk agreement for the countryside."⁵

As this farmers' protest was blossoming into a confrontation with national resonance, Solidarity's factory workers were launching the first of their nationwide work boycotts in their battle over a five-day workweek.

3. Raina, *Poland*, 1981, 57.

4. The protesters were evicted from the building by police on 12 January, but continued their demonstrations for more than another month. See "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 12 January 1981; and Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, III.

5. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 114.

Work-Free Saturdays

The struggle for a five-day, forty-hour workweek in Poland also had deep roots. The Polish workers' considered it to be nothing more than a demand for the same conditions enjoyed by workers not only in Western Europe but in Eastern bloc countries such as East Germany and Hungary. The shorter workweek had been promised to them at the beginning of the Gierek regime ten years earlier, and they were still waiting for it to be delivered. The Gdansk accord signed on 31 August 1980 included a provision stating that the government would present by the end of the year a program for more work-free Saturdays, or other ways of shortening what was then a forty-six-hour workweek (eight hours each weekday and six hours on Saturday). The agreement signed with the miners at Jastrzebie three days after the Gdansk settlement went further, with a government commitment to make all Saturdays work free in 1981.⁶

The government subsequently made the not unreasonable argument that because of the state of the Polish economy it would be damaging to try to move too quickly to a forty-hour week, and that two work-free Saturdays per month were all the economy could afford.⁷ The government also correctly pointed out that its specific commitment for *all* Saturdays to be work-free had been made only to the miners at Jastrzebie. In early November the government floated (in its controlled media) the alternatives of a five-day week with longer workdays for a 42.5 hour week, or a mix of five- and six-day workweeks with pre-designated work-free Saturdays.

Solidarity rejected both alternatives, insisting that the government was obligated to make all Saturdays in 1981 work-free. Solidarity's reaction was driven to a large extent by distrust of government intentions among the union's increasingly radicalized rank and file. Even though in this case the government had some legitimate arguments, the workers looked upon the latest offer of partial implementation as just one more instance of government evasion of its commitments in the Gdansk agreement. Whether there was room for negotiation is difficult to discern, because the regime did not try.

6. Detailed accounts of the struggle over work-free Saturdays are in Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 103-5; Ascherson, *Polish August*, 235-37, which includes an English translation of the passage in the Gdansk Agreement dealing with work-free Saturdays; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 135-37; and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 30-37.

7. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 135, cites a *London Times* article of 10 January 1981 that said "it was unreasonable of the [Polish] workers to demand shorter working hours until productivity improved."

After a prolonged period of noncommunication, the government unilaterally declared in late December that there would be only twenty-five work-free Saturdays in 1981. Then on 2 January this was modified to grant work-free Saturdays on alternative weekends throughout 1981, with a commitment to gradually increase the number of work-free Saturdays each year to achieve a forty-hour week by 1985. This in effect meant there would be two working Saturdays per month through 1981, beginning with 10 January and 24 January. Solidarity responded on 7 January by resolving to observe a five-day, forty-hour workweek until the government came up with an acceptable proposal. The Intelligence Community's reporting on these events referred to Solidarity's reaction as "setting the stage for a confrontation."⁸

Massive work boycotts were carried out on both of the government-designated work Saturdays in January, despite the regime's announcement that those who did not work would not be paid. The full number of workers who participated in the boycotts was subject to some uncertainty and dispute. Solidarity claimed the figures were about 70 percent on 10 January and some 70 to 90 percent on 24 January. The government claimed that only 35 percent of the workforce observed the boycott on the first Saturday and that only about 40 percent did so on the second one.⁹

The Intelligence Community reporting did not attempt to resolve the competing claims on specific numbers, pointing out that by any tabulation the participation on 10 January was an impressive demonstration of strength, and that the number participating on 24 January was even larger. Even the government's lower percentages would produce numbers into the millions. The intelligence reporting pointed out that many of Poland's industrial centers were idled, and that by any measurement the boycotts dramatically demonstrated Solidarity's power to galvanize workers nationwide in defiance of the regime.¹⁰

Reflecting sensitivity to charges that its actions were contrary to the national economic interest, Solidarity insisted that what it was seeking was the government's agreement to the *principle* that all Saturdays would be

8. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NIDs* of 3 January and 8 January 1981. Additional background is in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 30–31.

9. The numbers used here are from Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 32. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 136, describes a somewhat lower participation on 10 January, while Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 104 describes it as "most workers [in Poland]," which would put it at the order of magnitude claimed by Solidarity.

10. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NIDs*, 12 January and 26 January 1981.

work-free. The union declared that once there was agreement on this principle, discussions could be conducted on postponing full implementation out of concern for the national interest. In what was interpreted by some observers as a further effort to deflect charges that its boycott was for self-serving provisions contrary to the national economic interest, Solidarity also declared the 24 January boycott to be a protest for a broader range of previously contested issues.¹¹ These included implementation of demands that factory workers had been pressing since the Gdansk agreement—access to Polish media, easing of censorship, release of political prisoners, and official codification in law of the status of independent unions—and the registration of Rural Solidarity.

The inclusion of an independent farmers union on the list of demands attached to the nationwide work boycott was viewed by both the Polish and Soviet leaders as indicating a growing alliance between workers and peasants. Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission had already made a public declaration of support for the protesting farmers in Rzeszow on 8 January, just before the first Saturday work boycott by the factory workers, and Solidarity representatives began joining the farmers' sit-in there. On 19 January the workers at the Szczecin Shipyard, one of the three main sites of the confrontations back in August 1980, said they would launch a sympathy strike. The next day Solidarity's National Commission passed resolutions declaring that 28 January would be a "Day of Solidarity" with the farmers. Worker committees around the country were asked to send delegates to Rzeszow, and Walesa showed up there on that "Day of Solidarity" to deliver another of his crowd-rousing oratories. The government began direct negotiations with the farmers there the next day.¹²

Meanwhile, in the heady atmosphere of union power demonstrated by the Saturday work boycotts, a rash of wildcat strikes broke out at various regional centers throughout Poland. Solidarity's National Commission, partly as an effort to regain control over its increasingly belligerent rank

11. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 24 January 1981. The perception that the broadening of issues was a tactic to deflect the "national interest" criticism was also described in "10 Cities in Poland Swept by Work Stoppages," *NYT*, 23 January 1981, A1; and "Walesa Urges Poles to Stage Boycott of Their Jobs Today," *NYT*, 24 January 1981, A1.

12. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 8 January 1981; and "Poland," decl. *NID*, 21 January 1981. A day-to-day account of these developments is in Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 110–34. See also Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 104–6. For Soviet reactions, see Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 79–84. The talks were initiated by the provincial governor and minister of trade unions, and taken over a few days later by the deputy minister of agriculture.

and file, announced on 28 January that the union would impose a one-hour national demonstration strike on 3 February if the government had not by then met the demands for work-free Saturdays, registration of Rural Solidarity, and free access to the media. The union also tentatively agreed to consider declaring a longer strike on 18 February if negotiations with the government did not show satisfactory progress.¹³

Assessing the Prospects

This growing level of confrontation in Poland immediately revived concerns in Washington over the possibility of Soviet military intervention. An intelligence report in mid-January said that any capitulation to the workers' political demands probably would be read by Moscow as evidence that, contrary to the commitments made at the 5 December meeting in Moscow, Kania was conceding further ground.¹⁴ And these new confrontations were erupting in Poland at the same time the United States was undergoing a change in administrations.

Outgoing President Carter had highlighted the turmoil in Poland in his final message to Congress, describing it as a critical and continuing policy challenge for the United States and its NATO allies. The first interagency policy meeting on Poland under the new administration was held on 23 January, just three days after President Reagan's inauguration.¹⁵ By this time the independent farmers in southwest Poland had already launched their occupation strikes, a sit-in by student protesters was beginning southwest of Warsaw in the city of Lodz, Solidarity's first Saturday work boycott had already been carried out, and the second one was about to take place. The State Department saw a need that same day to issue a public statement that the United States had so far seen no recent indications of Soviet preparations for military action in Poland.¹⁶

13. "Poland," decl. *NID*, 16 January 1981 (on wildcat strikes); "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 29 January 1981 (on threat of more strikes). Also "Wildcat Strikes Continue in Poland," *NYT*, 29 January 1981, A7.

14. "USSR-Poland: Moscow's Position," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 12 January 1981.

15. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 227

16. The State Department statement appears in "Walesa Urges Poles to Stage Boycotts," *NYT*, 24 January 1981, 1. The Haig letter stirred a mini dust-up in the media when it was leaked (reportedly by the Soviets) on 28 January, a day before Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin delivered a response from Gromyko. The Soviet Foreign Minister's response "reaffirmed" the "Joint Communiqué" from the 5 December Warsaw Pact summit in Moscow. The Soviets

The next day, incoming Secretary of State Alexander Haig, in responding to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's perfunctory congratulatory note on his appointment, included a reaffirmation of former President Carter's warning of the major consequences for East-West relations if the Soviets intervened militarily in Poland.

A *National Intelligence Estimate* (*NIE*) disseminated at the end of January presented a stark picture of the long-term outlook.¹⁷ It described the situation as a "protracted crisis" with "no prospect for resolution of the basic tensions between workers and the regime in the months ahead." The *NIE* pointed out that at the 5 December meeting in Moscow, Kania had received a clear message that he had little room for maneuver. The *NIE* said that he would "feel compelled in the interests of preserving his own position to initiate more forceful measures to quell domestic turmoil and to head off conservative criticism that his 'leniency' is perpetuating instability." Reigning in hard-liners in these conditions would be difficult.

At the same time, Solidarity's leadership was under pressure from the union's rank and file to continue to push for full implementation of the provisions of the accords that had ostensibly settled the wave of strikes in the latter half of 1980. Most Polish workers considered the party's walk-back tactics in the union registration crisis, the provocative measures exerted in the Narozeniak affair, and the continued obstructionism of local party officials, as clear demonstrations that confrontation was the only way to get the regime to act on its promises.

The *NIE* also described the way in which these tensions were being exacerbated by the inability of leaders of both the party and the union to exert effective control over the activities of their regional components. In the provinces, party officials as well as labor organizations interpreted national agreements and compromises in terms of their local concerns. Regional government and party authorities, in fact, frequently refused to deal with local union branches and ignored agreements reached by the national lead-

subsequently publicized the text of Gromyko's response on 11 February, along with rebuttals to Secretary Haig's letter. See "President Sharply Assails Kremlin: Haig Warning on Poland Disclosed," *NYT*, 30 January 1981; and "Soviets Disclose Gromyko Letter to Haig," *NYT*, 12 February 1981, A1, and "Text of Letter," A12.

17. "Poland's Prospects Over the Next Six Months," decl. *NIE* 12.6-81, 1. The remainder of this section is a description of the picture presented in this *NIE* and the perceptions of intelligence analysts at the time. There is a striking similarity, however, in the descriptions given by intelligence analysts at the time and the portrayals by Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 97-103, and Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 101-9, both authors having been in Poland at the time. (The first edition of Garton Ash's book was published in 1983, Andrews's in 1985.)

erships, continuing instead to function in their long-established opaque, arbitrary, and self-serving manner.

Meanwhile, local union organizations often used their newfound powers of strikes and sit-ins to address local complaints and redress past grievances, in many cases demanding the removal of officials they accused of corruption and misuse of office. Solidarity's leaders felt compelled to support their regional constituents, to avoid exacerbating the divisions that were already beginning to appear in the workers' movement. This provided additional fuel for local confrontations to burgeon into a national crisis.

The Polish party was experiencing its own increasing pressures for decentralization of power, led mainly by local party chapters and lower echelon members in what became known as the "Horizontal Movement." This movement was demanding new party statutes for electing party officials by secret ballot to fixed terms, barring party officials from simultaneously holding government positions, initiating binding policies from below, and holding top leadership accountable for its performance. Some local party bodies had already begun to defy directives from higher echelons.

From Moscow's perspective, this was yet another challenge to the central authority of the Polish United Workers Party. It also was a clear validation of warnings from the leaders of several of the Soviet allied regimes in East Europe about the "contagion" potential of the Polish labor movement and civil opposition. The "Horizontal Movement" in the Polish party quickly became the target of Soviet media attacks of the same tenor as had been launched at Solidarity, and added steam to Soviet efforts to push the Polish leadership into reasserting its control.

Underlying all of these destabilizing factors was the miserable state of the Polish economy. Its condition was the cumulative result of systemic flaws exacerbated by ten years of incompetent direction under the Gierek regime. The economic stresses had prompted the clumsily implemented price increases in mid-1980, which then set off the wave of strikes that catalyzed the labor and civil opposition movement embodied in Solidarity. Those events in turn exerted a further depression on the economy. For example, the mining and ship building strikes and the terms of their settlement reduced output in both industries, and both were critical export products for Poland. Hard currency earnings therefore went down even further and the debt level went higher. The loss of hard currency earnings caused some factories dependent on materials or components from the West to shut down, further reducing output. Similarly, the increased wages paid to placate the strikers throughout the country simply put more money

chasing fewer goods and ratcheted up inflation. This economic dilemma increased pressures on the Solidarity leadership to continue to push its demands on wages, benefits, and working hours. The same economic conditions made it more difficult for the government to respond to those demands.¹⁸

All of these factors led the U.S. Intelligence Community, at the end of January, to assign a higher probability for Polish-imposed martial law than had been the case in earlier assessments. It said that “in comparison with the October–November 1980 period, the chances are greater that the Polish regime will respond with force, probably at Soviet urging, if faced with a major confrontation such as a prolonged general strike or the threat of such a major confrontation.” In presenting this judgment, the *NIE* drew on the growing evidence of Polish martial law planning and the belief that Moscow was reluctant to incur the high political and economic costs of carrying out a military intervention. The *NIE* pointed out that the Soviets had a number of options for pushing the Poles to take stronger measures, including engineering another change in Polish leadership, increasing political pressure, and engaging in demonstrative military posturing to heighten the specter of intervention.¹⁹

Intelligence analysts believed they had already seen an indication of such a strategy in the mid-January visit to Warsaw by a large contingent of senior Soviet military officers, headed by the Commander-in-Chief of Warsaw Pact Forces, Soviet Marshal Kulikov and his Deputy Commander, Army-General Gribkov. For public consumption, the Soviet story was that the officers had come to attend the anniversary celebrations of the 1945 Soviet liberation of Warsaw, but Western media reported speculation that the visit was connected to the ongoing crisis in Poland. U.S. intelligence analysts believed the primary mission of the military delegation was to assess the loyalty of the Polish military. Another Soviet delegation, led by Central Committee member Leonid Zamyatin, also visited Poland at the same time, and intelligence analysts believed it was there to perform the same evaluation task with the Polish political cadres.²⁰

18. The Intelligence Community’s description of the economic despair of Poland at this time and the friction within both the Party and union is presented in detail in “Poland’s Prospects Over the Next Six Months,” decl. *NIE* 12.6–81, 5–9.

19. *Ibid.*, “Key Judgments,” 2–3, and text, 10–12.

20. For a public media view of the Soviet military delegation, see “Russian Alliance Chiefs Turn Up In Poland,” *NYT*, 14 January 1981, A3. The interpretations of the purpose of the military delegation have been confirmed in subsequent information from Kuklinski and most

But while the January *NIE* described a somewhat increased chance that the Polish leaders might attempt martial law, it portrayed little increase in the Polish Army's dependability in carrying it out. It said that if large-scale violence erupted, the Polish army was unlikely to be able on its own to contain it, and that the most likely outcome would be disintegration of the armed forces. As a consequence, according to the *NIE*, "The introduction of Polish military forces under such circumstances would run a high risk of bringing about the intervention of Soviet forces."²¹

The intelligence analysts also concluded that "whatever the Soviet perception of the costs of intervention, they would quickly fade into secondary considerations if the Soviets see their vital interests threatened." The *NIE* said that while the Soviets probably had not set a specific timetable when they granted Kania more time to bring the situation under control, they would "not allow the present deterioration to continue indefinitely." Among the developments listed as likely to provoke "one or another form of Soviet military intervention" was "a general strike of some duration to which the regime did not respond decisively." (This judgment was recorded the day before Solidarity announced its threat of a general strike for 3 February.)²²

The concluding paragraph of the *NIE* stated:

We believe that Soviet military activities in November and December demonstrate that the Soviets are in fact willing to intervene militarily. As time passes and if the regime shows no convincing progress in consolidating the party and gaining control of events, the Soviets are likely to conclude that nonintervention options are insufficient. . . . We believe that Soviet pressure on the Polish regime will increase and that, if the pattern of domestic confrontation continues, the trend is toward ultimate intervention.²³

recently in Gribkov's own account. See Kuklinski, "Suppression of Solidarity," 87. Gribkov's account is described in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 8, translator's note 112, and document 11, translator's note 131. On the Zamyatin delegation, see Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 82. Zamyatin's visit was also reported in Moscow, *Pravda*, 21 January 1981.

21. "Poland's Prospects Over the Next Six Months," decl. *NIE* 12.6-81, "Key Judgments," 3, and text, 13.

22. Ibid., "Key Judgments," 2, text, 10-11.

23. Ibid., "Key Judgments," 3, and text 12-15, for the detailed basis for this judgment.

More Government Concessions and New Confrontations

On 30 January, as this intelligence estimate was being distributed to U.S. policy agencies, a Solidarity delegation headed by Lech Walesa was meeting in the Council of Ministers building in Warsaw with a delegation led by Prime Minister Pinkowski. Walesa had met with Pinkowski on two earlier occasions (19 and 21 January) in an attempt to resolve the issue of the length of the workweek, but no results had been achieved. On this day, however, Solidarity and the government reached a compromise agreement.

The government offered a commitment to the goal of establishing a forty-hour week, while the Union agreed that movement toward this goal would be gradual and take into account the economic situation. The two sides agreed that for the remainder of 1981, every fourth Saturday would be an eight-hour workday, resulting in an average workweek of forty-two hours. The government also agreed (in writing) to the weekly publication of a Solidarity national journal, although commitments regarding Solidarity's access to radio and TV were somewhat obtuse. The issues relating to Rural Solidarity remained unresolved, but Western observers nonetheless tended to view the outcome of the meeting as "a substantial victory for the union."²⁴

On its face, the difference between the agreement reached on 30 January and the proposal floated by the regime back in November seemed small relative to the level of confrontation to which Solidarity had pushed the situation. The confrontation, however, was at least as much over the regime's tactics as it was over the terms of its plan—mainly the failure of the government to bring Solidarity into consultations on issues for which the workers had a major stake. In a rare public acknowledgment, a Polish deputy minister subsequently stated at a news conference two months later that the government had erred in not submitting its initial proposals for public discussion, and in not sending them to the heads of the unions for comment and negotiation.²⁵

From this perspective the real measure of Solidarity's "win" was the demonstration of the union's place at the decision table for issues that

24. "Strike Threat Eases As Talks In Poland Produce Agreement," *NYT*, 1 February 1981, 1 (including "substantial victory" quote); Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 105; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 136-37; Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 36-39 (which includes the text of the public declaration of what was agreed).

25. Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 105, citing an article in the Polish *Tribjuna Luda* of 23 February 1981.

affected the jobs and well being of the workers. U.S. intelligence analysts concluded that both the Polish populace and the Soviet leadership would see it this way.²⁶

Nonetheless, the agreement provoked a stormy debate in Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission, reflecting the fractiousness of the union's leadership and the growing militancy of its rank and file. Again, criticism was provoked as much by process as content. Walesa was charged with taking too much authority on himself to conduct negotiations and make commitments. Some union representatives argued that because Rural Solidarity's registration remained unresolved, the general strike that had been threatened for 3 February should be carried out. Walesa and other moderates ultimately prevailed in having the strike "suspended."²⁷

Meanwhile, the farmers at Rzeszow and Ustrzyki Dolne continued their sit-ins, and regional wildcat strikes continued to erupt. The sit-in of students at Lodz also was sparking sympathy strikes at other academic centers. The students were demanding university reforms and recognition of their own nationwide Independent Students Union.

One of the more prominent regional strikes was in the province of Bielsko-Biala, in south-central Poland. Without consulting the union's national leadership body, Solidarity's Interfactory Committee in that province had launched a sit-in on 26 January at 110 industrial plants in the province. The strikers were demanding the removal from office of several regional government officials on charges of abusing local government funds and failing to implement agreements that had been reached with the Union. Walesa sought to contain the confrontation and enlisted intervention by the church, but he also felt compelled to threaten a national strike if force was employed against the strikers.²⁸

On 6 February a settlement was reached when it was announced that the Prime Minister had accepted the resignation of Belsko-Biala's regional governor and two deputy governors. An intelligence report pointed out that the regime had reversed itself in yielding to the demands of the strikers. The report said these concessions would "provide more ammunition

26. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 3 February 1981.

27. "Polish Labor Union Calls Off Strike Set For Tomorrow," *NYT*, 2 February 1981, A1; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 140–42.

28. "Workers in Poland Alerted For Sit-In If Any Force Used," *NYT*, 5 February 1981, A1; "Strike in Southern Poland Ends As Government Yields," *NYT*, 6 February 1981, A1; Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 109–10; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 141–42; Ascherson, *Polish August*, 261.

for hard-liners' criticism of . . . Kania's moderate policies." Three days later another regional general strike began in the southwestern province of Jelenia Gora. Again, the issues were local—demands for the ouster of the regional Minister of Trade Union Affairs (who had been an unpopular provincial party secretary) and for the transfer to public use of a local Ministry of Internal Affairs health facility (mainly used by security forces). Intelligence analysts viewed this as adding more fuel to what already was shaping up as a highly charged party Central Committee meeting opening that same day.²⁹

29. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NIDs*, 7 and 9 February 1981. For more background on Jelenia Gora, see Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 113-14; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 142; Ascherson, *Polish August*, 261.

Chapter 7: Jaruzelski Takes the Government Reins

The party opened its latest Central Committee meeting on 9 February, and at the end of the first day announced that Prime Minister Pinkowski had resigned and that Defense Minister Jaruzelski had been selected as his successor. This was not unexpected. In the existing cauldron of confrontation and concession, a change in the Polish leadership seemed a natural consequence. Even before the government concessions at Bielsko Biala, the Intelligence Community had been aware that a debate was brewing in the party leadership, with both hard-liners and moderates criticizing Kania's overall policies. Intelligence reports had said then that speculation was spreading that Prime Minister Pinkowski, who had overseen and in some cases had directly participated in the recent compromises, would be replaced.¹

Moscow also was judged as having played a central role. In the period preceding the changeover, the Soviets had been putting out vitriolic public criticism of Solidarity, while at the same time maneuvering behind the scenes to help Polish hard-liners prevail at the upcoming Central Committee meeting in naming a new Prime Minister, and establishing a tougher policy line. A Moscow-engineered leadership change had been one of the prospects described in the *National Intelligence Estimate* distributed just ten days earlier, and the Soviet actions leading up to the Polish party plenum that had reinforced this view.

An intelligence assessment after the leadership change said that the Polish party had almost certainly obtained Moscow's approval before naming Jaruzelski, and may have discussed the matter directly with Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov. A congratulatory letter to Jaruzelski from Brezhnev and Tikhonov was printed in *Pravda* the day after the appointment was formally ratified by the Polish parliament (the Sejm). Most analysts believed that the Soviets were not likely to endorse a successor that they did not judge to be willing to take the forceful measures they deemed necessary.²

1. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NIDs* of 5, 6, 7, and 9 February 1981.

2. Intelligence Community views of Jaruzelski's accession are in "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NIDs* of 10 and 12 February 1981. Examples of public speculation on the Soviet

At the same time, however, to both the Polish population and Western observers, Jaruzelski represented a mixed picture.³ From one standpoint he was an “orthodox Marxist . . . trusted by Moscow,” a communist soldier completely committed to communist ideology and loyal to the Soviet Union, where he had trained in Soviet officer schools. He had been a member of the Soviet-organized Polish army that fought alongside the Soviets on the eastern front in World War II and had crushed the anticommunist Polish resistance. He had become Minister of Defense in 1968 in time to oversee the Polish armed forces’ participation in the military intervention in Czechoslovakia. He had also been a member of the Politburo for more than ten years (selected as a candidate member in December 1970 and promoted to full member in December 1971).

The party meeting at which Jaruzelski was named Prime Minister had featured harsh rhetoric. Prominent hard-liner Grabski opened the session with the presentation of a report, which would also be printed in the party-controlled media the next day, purporting to describe the party’s views on how to deal with the trade unions. The report leveled its strongest criticism at the KOR, the organization of dissident intelligentsia supporting Solidarity. Attacking KOR leaders by name, Grabski’s diatribe charged the organization with having an “antisocialist orientation,” and seeking to maintain tensions to undercut the government’s efforts to resolve the problems of the economy and society. (A judicial investigation of the KOR had in fact been announced the previous day, under accusations of “antistate activity.”) The Grabski report also criticized the party leadership for “capitulation.”⁴

Kania made his own a combative presentation, characterizing Poland’s problems as resulting from efforts at “counterrevolution,” and pointedly

connection to Jaruzelski’s accession are in “Polish Court Denies Appeal by Farmers . . . ,” *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A1; and “New Polish Peril Seen in Moscow,” *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A11. A summary of Soviet media coverage in this period and a translated copy of the congratulatory letter is in Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 85–89, and 93. See also “Soviet Army Paper Says NATO is Wooing Solidarity,” *NYT*, 29 January 1981, A6.

3. For diverse perceptions of Jaruzelski at the time, see “Polish Premier Ousted,” *NYT*, 10 February 1980, A1; “Poland’s Four Star Premier,” *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A8; Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 114–18; Ascherson, *Polish August*, 261; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 143–46; Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 68–72. The quoted passage is from Dobbs, 68.

4. The Grabski Report appeared in *Trybuna Lwia*, 10 February 1981, 2–3, and is described in Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 114, and in Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 145. The investigation of the KOR was reported in “Warsaw Announces Plan to Investigate Dissident Group,” *NYT*, 9 February 1981, A1. By this time the group had expanded its formal title to “Social Self-Defense Committee-Workers Defense Committee” (Komitet Samoobrony Społecznej- Komitet Obrony Robotników, or KSS-KOR) but most references continued to use either the old acronym of KOR, or an abbreviated title “Social Self-Defense Committee.”

noting that “the patient understanding” shown by the USSR and “other friends” could run out. Virtually all speakers at the Central Committee meeting rejected the idea of allowing farmers to register as an independent union. At the conclusion of the meeting, a resolution was issued listing three levels of action to be pursued by the party: isolation and containment of groups “hostile to socialist rule,” strengthening government power and authority, and institution of a program of “socialist renewal.”⁵

Against this background, Jaruzelski’s selection for prime minister was interpreted by most observers as a demonstration that the Polish leadership meant business. The selection of a currently serving military officer to be prime minister was unprecedented, and was seen as increasing the influence of the military in political affairs and moving the government closer to a military crackdown. Jaruzelski’s declaration that he would still retain the position of defense minister was described by CIA analysts as intended to underscore regime hints that martial law would be declared if necessary. The analysts said that while the Polish leaders probably still regarded martial law as a last resort, Jaruzelski’s dual role would avoid some of the problems involved in a transfer of authority from civilian to military hands.⁶

Within Poland, however, Jaruzelski’s military status was more commonly perceived as a positive factor. The army as an institution was held in high regard by the Polish citizenry, a view reinforced by its having so far refrained from involvement in the internal political conflicts of the past year. Jaruzelski was considered to be an outstanding professional army officer under whose leadership the military had been organizationally improved and modernized. He also had—deservedly—a “clean” image, having abstained from the corruption and material aggrandizement that was common practice among the party elite. One occasional criticism by his supporters was that he could be “indecisive,” although as future events would show it could be argued that this was really a manifestation of his meticulous care in preparing his moves.

Jaruzelski was also generally considered to be one of the party moderates, and his selection as prime minister was interpreted as indicating that the moderates were still in control of the party. He was widely reputed, including in the Western media, to have opposed the use of force to suppress strikes and demonstrations. He was said to have opposed Gomulka’s order for using the army to crackdown on protesting workers at Gdansk

5. Kania’s Plenum speech was described in “Polish Court Denies Appeal by Farmers . . . ,” *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A1. The resolution is in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 50.

6. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 12 February 1981.

and Gdynia in December 1970, and to have subsequently withdrawn his political support for Gomulka. He also was reported to have vetoed the use of the army in the 1976 confrontation, and opposed its use to quell the strikes in the Gdansk region in August 1980. The validity of this portrait was and remains a matter of some debate, particularly in the aftermath of the actions he would impose by the end of the year. Nonetheless, its currency at the time is illustrated by the fact that among the sources cited for this moderate picture in Western media accounts were “U.S. intelligence analyst[s].”⁷

Jaruzelski’s actions and statements at the time he took over the prime minister’s post also contributed to the mixed picture. In his acceptance speech before the Sejm on 12 February, he echoed the tough talk that had been voiced at the Party Central Committee meeting. Referring to “evil and hostile political forces . . . expanding their activities opposed to socialism,” he said that the situation “could not be allowed to go on” and that “the time has come to arrest a creeping process that has undermined the stability of the country’s public life. There is no room for two systems of authority in the state. Such a situation would inevitably lead to a collision with disastrous consequences for the country and the nation.”

On the other hand, he exhibited a pragmatic willingness to engage Solidarity, and expressed determination to introduce a “comprehensive social dialog.” He proposed a ninety-day moratorium on strikes—“ninety days of peace”—urging that “[W]e could use that time to put in order the most fundamental problems of our economy, to take account of both positive and negative aspects [of public life], to undertake the most urgent social programs, to take the first steps toward the introduction of a pro-

7. On the view of Jaruzelski’s “indecisiveness,” see Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 144. For contrary information on his alleged objection to the use of force in 1970, see Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land* (New York: Random House, 1995), 211. Another version of the story (Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 115) is that the party had by-passed Jaruzelski in ordering the army’s actions at Gdansk in 1970. Since Jaruzelski was at the time the defense minister and had just been made a candidate member of the Politburo, this account, if true, raises questions of its own about his political maneuvering. Polish archives also show that he signed a secret directive declaring that the army would cooperate with the Ministry of the Interior in suppressing the turmoil. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, “Introduction,” 6. As regards the statements attributed to him in 1976 and 1980, some have interpreted that he actually was not referring to his own principles but rather to his judgment of the reliability of the army, citing as an example his remarks recorded in PZPR Protocol #28, of 29 August 1980, in Woldek, *Tajne Dokumenty*. An example of media citations of statements from a “U.S. intelligence analyst” is in “Poland’s Four-Star Premier,” *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A8.

gram of economic stability, and to prepare for wide-ranging reforms of the country." As an instrument for such cooperation he announced the creation of a "permanent committee" for government and union relations, appointing as its head with the rank of deputy prime minister a reputed party "reformist," Mieczyslaw Rakowski, editor of the party journal *Polityka*. Jaruzelski also announced a number of reform laws he intended to introduce to the Sejm. He remained unyielding, however, on the existing censorship laws and was noncommittal on the question of Solidarity's access to mass media.⁸

Official reactions in Washington were initially somewhat ambiguous. The day after Jaruzelski's appointment was announced in Warsaw, a State Department spokesperson said in an official, on-the-record press briefing that as regards the change in Polish leadership, "[W]e see no development [to change] our assessment that the Poles are perfectly capable of handling their internal affairs without outside interference." The spokesperson also said that "if Polish forces intervened to establish order we would consider that an internal matter." Later that day, in what clearly reflected a realization that this could be seen as giving a green light to martial law, the State department put out an amendment, saying that "[i]n no way did [we] intend to suggest that such a development would not be a matter of grave concern to us."

An official statement released two days later leaned a little more toward cautious optimism, saying the U.S. government was "looking forward to a constructive relationship with the new Polish prime minister." Other press accounts citing unnamed "Western analysts" and "intelligence sources" said that a crackdown was not expected. These sources were said to believe that Jaruzelski had indeed opposed the use of force in the past and that he was still opposed to it. The same sources were quoted as believing the Polish army would oppose use of force for party goals.⁹

8. "State Department Briefing . . . ," *NYT*, 12 February 1981, A13, which described Jaruzelski's actions in his first days as "zigzagging"; "Polish Leader Asks 90 Strike-Free Days," *NYT*, 13 February 1981, A1. See also Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 115-17; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 145.

9. "U.S. Aides See Pole's Promotion as Bid by Warsaw to Look Firm," *NYT*, 10 February 1981, A12; "Poland's Four-Star Premier," *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A8; "U.S. Doubts Moscow Will Invade Poland," *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A1 (which described U.S. statements as reflecting "some confusion"); "U.S. Vows to Keep Hands Off Poland," *NYT*, 13 February 1981, A5.

Grounds for Hope

On balance, Jaruzelski's elevation to prime minister was taken by Solidarity as offering a strong leader who could bring needed order and discipline to the government. While he was expected to be tough on some issues, he also was seen as having the ability and determination to live up to commitments, which to Solidarity was a welcome contrast to a pattern of commitments that lasted only as long as it took to calm the latest confrontation. A commonly used characterization was that Jaruzelski was the "last chance" or "last card" for resolving the tumult in Poland without resorting to force.¹⁰

On 10 February, even before Jaruzelski's accession was confirmed by the parliament, the government agreed to the demands of the strikers at Jelenia Gora and handed over the contested health facility to the local public health service. On this same day, the Polish Supreme Court finally issued its ruling on Rural Solidarity's registration. It said that because Rural Solidarity members were self-employed rather than employees, the organization could not register as a "union," but could register as an independent "association."

Walesa reportedly called this a draw, and urged the farmers to register as prescribed in the court decision. The farmers, however, agreed only to "suspend" their demands until a law on trade unions was taken up by the Sejm. The other two aspirant farmers' unions—Peasants Solidarity and the Union of Agriculture Producers—had recently merged with Rural Solidarity, and there was no inclination in this unified farmers organization to settle for anything less than their own legally registered and recognized "independent self-governing union" equivalent to Solidarity.¹¹

Adopting a cautiously optimistic stance, Solidarity conditionally agreed to Jaruzelski's appeal for a ninety-day strike moratorium by declaring its willingness to refrain from actions affecting industries if the regime kept its promises. On the same day that Jaruzelski made his acceptance speech to the Sejm, Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission (KKP) issued a resolution against wildcat strikes. It admonished that "The plethora of local and regional strikes pursuing disparate aims without consent of the National

10. Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 115 ("last chance"); Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 145 ("last card"). An example of similar views expressed in the Western press is in "Polish Union Chief Indicates He Backs 90 Strike-Free Days," *NYT*, 15 February 1981, A1.

11. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 11 February 1981; "Polish Court Dismisses Appeal By Farmers for Trade Union," *NYT*, 11 February 1981, A1; Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 118; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 132. The "draw" expression was quoted in the *NYT*, and is also cited by Garton Ash.

Commission—and often against its advice—not only make little impact, they have sometimes been provoked by advocates of confrontation among those in authority as a means to disrupt our unity. As a result we are threatened with dismemberment into fifty regional organizations. This would mean the destruction of our movement.”

The resolution concluded by forbidding any regional strikes without prior approval by the union’s National Coordinating Commission, and said that the Commission would “publicly disavow any action undertaken in disregard of this appeal.”¹²

Also on that day, in an attempt to prevent some of the friction that had been recently experienced among its leadership, Solidarity’s National Commission created a “permanent presidium.” Until then, there had been no permanent union executive component that maintained operational status between the periodic meetings of the National Commission. The newly created “presidium” was commissioned to act for and to represent the union at the national level between National Commission meetings, thus providing a national body to take up government negotiations for the regional chapters.¹³

The promising outlook was reinforced by the accomplishments in the following week. On 16 February the Polish government accepted the registration of an independent student union, on condition that its statutes include a clause obligating it to abide by the Polish constitution. The next day a general agreement was reached ending the student strikes, which had by then spread from Lodz to several large cities. The government made a commitment to grant more autonomy to universities and agreed that students would no longer be required to study Russian language.

One day later, an agreement was signed in Rzeszow by representatives of the government, Solidarity, and the Farmers Strike Committee. The government agreed to guarantee the inviolability of peasants’ private property and their rights to inheritance, and to recognize private farming as a lasting and equal element in the Polish national economy. Prohibitive restrictions on sale and purchase of private farmland were to be lifted. The Rzeszow Farmers Strike Committee made its acceptance of this agreement conditional

12. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 13 February 1981. “Polish Union Chief Indicates He Backs 90 Strike-Free Days,” *NYT*, 15 February 1981, A1. The full text of the declaration is in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 52–54. The wording could be interpreted as allowing exceptions for the need to respond to “a direct attack by authorities upon members or collaborators of Solidarity or on union chapters.”

13. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 143.

on an agreement being reached with the protesters at Ustrzyki Dolne. This was achieved two days later when the government agreed to return to local residents the land that had been set aside there as a resort for party officials.¹⁴

A week earlier, after Jaruzelski's confirmation by the Polish parliament, an intelligence assessment had said that the Soviets would give Warsaw's "new tack" a chance. The analysis said "Moscow still appears reluctant to adopt the alternative course of intervention without collaboration by the Polish government . . . [but] should the [strike] moratorium break down or require significant concessions to Solidarity, the Soviets are likely to demand that the Polish party implement martial law."¹⁵

If this assessment was correct, Moscow could not have seen the first week of Jaruzelski's tenure as a promising start. The combined bottom line of the agreements reached by the government was that a Polish regime that was supposed to be striving for the model of Soviet socialism had in effect endorsed, in a written agreement subsequently published in its official party press, the private ownership and market trade of agricultural property. The Soviets had other information, however, that cast the new leadership in a somewhat less conciliatory light. So did the CIA.

. . . and Grounds for Concern

At the same time Jaruzelski's public actions seemed to be reflecting accommodation, the CIA was receiving information that the regime was stepping up its martial law preparations. As Jaruzelski's appointment was being confirmed by the Polish parliament, the CIA reported to the president and senior national security officials that the Polish General Staff and internal security forces were about to test the martial law plans in a command and staff "war game" simulation. This CIA report was based on recent information from Ryszard Kuklinski, who continued to be intimately involved in the preparation and testing of the martial law procedures. Kuklinski subsequently reported that the simulation game took place the following week,

14. Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 106-9; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 132-34, 147. Andrews appears to describe the Ustrzyki Dolne and the Rzeszow agreements as having been reached in reverse order, but this may simply be a presentational interpretation. The full texts of the agreements are in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 59-74 (Rzeszow and Ustrzyki Dolne), and 77-80 (Lodz Students).

15. "Poland," Situation Report, decl. NID, 13 February 1981.

and that the plans then were adjusted and passed to Jaruzelski on 20 February. Jaruzelski passed the plans to the Soviets on 3 March in Moscow, in a meeting with Soviet Prime Minister Tikhonov at the conclusion of the Twenty-Sixth Soviet Party Congress.¹⁶

According to Gates, the intelligence report sent to the president said that Moscow and Warsaw still regarded martial law as a last resort because of the great risk of confrontation and widespread violence. Nonetheless, the report presented clear evidence that refinement of the martial law plans was advancing at the same time that Jaruzelski was promoting his public policy of “social dialogue.”

He had already, as defense minister, been playing a key role in the “Party-State Leadership [Crisis] Staff” that had been established at the time of the Gdańsk strikes in August 1980 to formulate guidance on martial law. He also commanded the armed forces that would be responsible for much of its implementation. Now, with his dual positions of prime minister and defense minister, he was both chairman and deputy chairman of the National Defense Committee, (Komitet Obrony Kraju or KOK, sometimes translated literally as “Homeland Defense Committee”), which was responsible for overseeing the plans and preparations for martial law. In the event martial law was declared, the National Defense Committee would control the military, police, and internal security forces. In sum, Jaruzelski now had full control over the planning process and the forces that would carry out the plans.

The Twenty-Sixth Soviet Party Congress opened on 23 February, shortly after the Poles had run their martial law simulation game, and Jaruzelski and Kania, as was customary for top party leaders for each of the Warsaw Pact states, attended the congress. They arrived for the opening, and on the second day Kania was the first East European party leader to give a presentation, in which he reiterated his promises to bring everything under control. A day later, however, both he and Jaruzelski returned to Warsaw.

It was most unusual for a Soviet party congress to not have one of the top party officials from each of the Warsaw Pact states present throughout the session. Intelligence analysts speculated that the Polish party leaders may have felt that in the existing situation they could not be out of their

16. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 229. Gates describes the interpretation of the reporting at the time as indicating the “game” was planned for 13–14 February. Kuklinski in his public interview said it was actually held on 16–18 February. See “The Suppression of Solidarity,” 84–85.

country for the nearly two week period of the Soviet Party Congress. The analysts also suggested, however, that after presenting their case, the Poles may have absented themselves for about a week to give the other Warsaw Pact leaders an opportunity to discuss the situation in Poland. In any event, they returned to Moscow on 3 March and Jaruzelski's meeting with Tikhonov that evening was reported in the Soviet media—although not all the details.¹⁷

The next day Kania, Jaruzelski, and two other members of the Polish delegation to the Soviet Party Congress met with a cast of Soviet Politburo heavyweights. The purpose clearly was to provide yet another forum for Soviet authorities to deliver an on-the-record verbal drubbing of the Polish leaders for not taking forceful measures, and for the Polish leaders to make their on-the-record promise to do so as soon as conditions were right. Soviet official media described the discussions at this meeting as having affirmed that the “socialist commonwealth is indissoluble,” and that its defense “is the affair not only of each state but of the entire socialist coalition as well.”

Intelligence analysts saw this as an unequivocal statement of what had been known after the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia as “the Brezhnev Doctrine.” The statement also expressed “the conviction . . . that the Polish communists have the ability and strength to reverse the course of events and to liquidate the dangers that threaten the socialist gains of the Polish people.” This was a fairly unambiguous message that the Polish leaders were expected to assert their authority, and that Moscow stood ready to “assist.” The statements were ominous enough by themselves, but carried extra weight for intelligence analysts who had been informed of the status and sharing of martial law plans.¹⁸

The previous day, the Soviets had informally put out word that joint Warsaw Pact exercises would be held “in the second half of March,” and would include forces of Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and the

17. “Poland,” decl. *NIDs*, 25 and 27 February 1981; “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 4 March 1981. It is now known that, on the evening of 4 March, Kania also met with Brezhnev. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, translator’s note 108 to document 9, regarding accounts by Kania and Jaruzelski.

18. “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NID*, 5 March 1981. For further text of the Soviet statements, see Cynkin, *Soviet and U.S. Signaling*, 97, citing the 5 March *Pravda* account in the *Radio Liberty Summary* for that day. Many scholars are under the impression that it was at this 4 March meeting that the martial law plans were passed. Kuklinski’s statement that they were passed over on 3 March, however, has since been reinforced by the accounts of Kania and Jaruzelski described in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, translator’s note 108. Both accounts also describe the “drubbing” on 4 March.

USSR. Over the next few days, U.S. intelligence agencies tracked preparations that included movement of combat vehicles and troop units out of barracks, and the deployment of mobile communications stations. On 10 March the USSR, Poland, and East Germany all made formal announcements confirming intelligence information that the exercises were to commence on 17 March. These announcements described the exercises as "command staff exercises," which intelligence analysts interpreted as an attempt to play down their size and avoid accusations of violating the Helsinki Accord requirement for three weeks' advance notice of field maneuvers involving more than 25,000 troops. All the preparations the intelligence analysts were detecting pointed to maneuvers of considerably more than 25,000 troops.

Major Warsaw Pact joint exercises were fairly routine for the spring, a point that had been made in the *NIE* disseminated at the end of January. The Intelligence Community had already reported a month earlier that exercises of substantial dimension would be held in the western USSR and Poland in March. Nonetheless, the background of events in recent months, and especially the fact that the exercises were occurring just as the martial law planning seemed to be reaching a new level, generated substantial uneasiness among intelligence analysts. The exercises seemed to be shaping up very much along the lines of the maneuvers that intelligence sources had described being prepared in December 1980, but which had been "postponed"—maneuvers that could provide a cover for putting in place Soviet forces intended to support a Polish-led military crackdown.

Washington made it known that the exercises would be given "extra scrutiny." This "scrutiny" produced public exchanges in which both the president and the secretary of state accused Moscow of violating the provision of the Helsinki Agreement on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Moscow felt compelled to issue a public denial, repeating that the scheduled activities would be only "command and communications" exercises in which the number of participating troops would be less than 25,000.

Shortly before the exercises were scheduled to begin, the Intelligence Community reported that while the preparations still indicated the participating forces would exceed the 25,000 threshold, there were no signs yet of the kinds of preparations that would be expected if the Soviets were planning to use the exercises as a cover for a large-scale military intervention in Poland. The U.S. administration then appeared to backtrack on its public warnings, putting out the word that "intelligence and Soviet assurances

had reduced concern about possible military intervention.” A least one media account described the State Department as worried about appearing to be “crying wolf.”¹⁹

19. The day-to-day reporting on the evolving situation and perceptions are described in “Poland,” Situation Report, decl. *NIDs* of 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, and 14 March 1981. Public accounts and exchanges are covered in “U.S.-Soviet Parley Linked To Poland,” *NYT*, 11 March 1981, A8; “U.S.-Soviet Differences Imperil Peace, Haig Says,” *NYT*, 14 March 1981, 3 (describing the Secretary’s statement on PBS the previous day); “Reagan Lifts Aid Freeze on Two City Projects,” *NYT*, 15 March 1981, 1 (which includes remarks the president added in reaction to the Polish situation); “Warsaw Pact Games Arouse U.S. Concerns,” *NYT*, 16 March 1981, A1; “State Department Accuses Soviet of Ignoring U.S. Appeals on Ending Hijacking,” 17 March 1981, A1; and “U.S. Now Voices Reduced Concern That Russians May Invade Poland,” *NYT*, 18 March 1981, A1.

Chapter 8: A Setup for Military Crackdown

By the time the *Soyuz '81* exercises began in the third week of March, the image of a “honeymoon” period for the new Polish prime minister was already proving to be an illusion. On 8–9 March, less than a week after Kania and Jaruzelski had been again dressed down by Soviet leaders in Moscow, *Rural Solidarity* held its first national congress in Poznan. Some five hundred private farmers elected by an organization that claimed to have 1.8 million members took part in what was described in the Western media as a “boisterous convention.” At the top of the agenda was their demand to be registered as a trade union rather than an association.¹

At the same time, *Solidarity* workers in the city of Lodz were threatening to shut down the city for one hour on 10 March to protest the firing of five hospital employees who had caught the director of the hospital siphoning off government-funded supplies. Walesa appealed to the workers to call off the strike, pointing out that it would coincide with his first meeting with Prime Minister Jaruzelski. The Lodz workers went ahead with their one-hour strike anyway, illustrating the tenuous ability of *Solidarity*’s leadership to control the actions of its lower echelon components. And the fact that this strike did indeed result in the reinstatement of the five hospital employees only reinforced the views of the union’s more radical elements that confrontation was the only way to get results.²

Meanwhile, workers at Radom, an industrial site near Warsaw, were also threatening a general strike. Their billboard demand was the dismissal of the local officials responsible for the violent repression of 1976. Adding impetus to the simmering animosity was what appeared to be an increasing pattern of harassment by police and security components. The regional union was persuaded to call off the strike on 16 March after direct appeals by Walesa, Jacek Kuron of the KOR, and a representative of the Polish

1. “Boisterous Convention of Polish Farmers Tries Democracy,” *NYT*, 10 March 1981, A8.

2. “Union Calls on Poles . . . ,” *NYT*, 10 March 1981, A8; “Workers in Lodz Stage 1-Hour Warning Strike,” *NYT*, 11 March 1981, A8; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 149.

Catholic church—and after the accused government officials agreed to resign.³

That same day, representatives of Rural Solidarity in Bydgoszcz, a regional capital about halfway between Warsaw and Gdańsk, occupied the offices there of the United Peasant Party (*Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe*—ZDL), a political front organization ostensibly representing Polish private farmers in parliamentary alignment with the Polish United Workers Party. The issue sparking the sit-in was the farmers' demand for recognition of their organization, and their protest over the local governing body's refusal to recognize their right to elect their own representatives to the local agricultural forums. The farmers were joined by representatives of Solidarity, including the regional representative on Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission, Jan Rulewski, who had a reputation as a militant.⁴

Three days later, on 19 March, uniformed police physically evicted a group of farmers and Solidarity representatives from a meeting hall of the Bydgoszcz Peoples Council, the body that passed for a regional legislature. As the protesters were pushed outside the building, a gang in civilian clothes (later reported to have been plain-clothed militia) physically assaulted them. Twenty-seven people were injured, and three—one of whom was Rulewski—were injured severely and hospitalized.

Protest strikes erupted the next day at locations throughout the country. Walsea called for calm but he and the entire Solidarity national leadership had no choice but to support the protests. Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission announced suspension of all talks with the government on all other issues until the regime formally promised to hold the perpetrators of the violence accountable. A nationwide strike alert was declared. A specific date for carrying out the general strike was to be set after discussions of the National Coordinating Commission, but workers were instructed to be ready by 23 March. Jaruzelski, meanwhile, immediately appointed a deputy prosecutor to carry out an investigation of the

3. "Polish Workers Threaten Strike at 1976 Clash Site," *NYT*, 12 March 1981, A2; "Polish Bishops Request Calm . . .," *NYT*, 14 March 1981, 3; "Poles Call Off Plans for Walkout . . .," *NYT*, 17 March 1981, A3; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 151; Cynkin, *Soviet and American Signaling*, 100.

4. Detailed accounts of the Bydgoszcz affair are in Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 120–26; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 151–60; and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 81–101. A concurrent picture of events as they unfolded is laid out in the daily articles of the *NYT* from 20 through 31 March 1981. The ZDL was formed in 1949 as part of the "united front" charade of the Communist takeover.

incident, and followed this up with the creation of an investigative commission headed by the justice minister.⁵

Polish official media initially portrayed the incident as simply a case of police doing their duty to restore order. The story given was that following the adjournment of the Regional Peoples Council session in Bydgoszcz, dissident private farmers and Solidarity representatives occupied the meeting hall. According to this version, when the protesters continued to refuse to leave despite appeals to do so by the mayor and deputy provincial governor, there was no choice but to call on the militia. The information on beatings was characterized as “claims” by Solidarity sources.⁶

In Washington, the Intelligence Community warned that the clash at Bydgoszcz had “raised political tension to its highest level since last November.” This assessment said that if a nationwide strike took place, the Polish regime would come under great pressure from its own hard-liners and Moscow to declare martial law. “In the current atmosphere, such an action [martial law] could lead to a total breakdown of civil order. If this were to occur, Moscow almost certainly would intervene militarily.”⁷

On Sunday, 22 March, following a meeting of its Politburo, the Polish party issued a statement characterizing the occupation of the Council Hall in Bydgoszcz as a “flagrant violation of law,” and a deliberate provocation by “some forces” in an effort to create new tensions. Two of the most unabashed party advocates of crackdown, Olszowski (who by this time was no longer viewed by intelligence analysts as a reformer) and Grabski, reportedly had tried at the Politburo meeting to exploit the incident and the resulting explosion of protest strikes to justify immediate imposition of martial law.⁸

Two days later, on 24 March, Solidarity’s National Coordinating Commission announced that a four-hour nationwide warning strike would be carried out on 27 March, and that a general strike would begin on 31 March if the following demands were not met:

5. “Polish Police Break Up Farmers Protest,” *NYT*, 20 March 1981, A3; “Scattered Strikes in Poland Protest Attack on Unionists,” *NYT*, 21 March 1981, A1; Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 27; Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 84.

6. Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 120, quoting a report in *Tribuna Luda*, 20 March 81, 2.

7. “Poland: Political Tension High,” decl. *NID*, 21 March 1981.

8. Ibid.; also “Polish Regime Ends Parley With Union Without Agreement,” *NYT*, 23 March 1981, A1; Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 122; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 153.

- Immediate punishment of those responsible for the Bydgoszcz incident.
- Registration of Rural Solidarity.
- Guarantees of security for all union members.
- Annulment of a government directive giving only half pay to strikers.
- Closure of all cases pending against people arrested for opposition activity between 1976 and 1980 (in effect, between the founding of the KOR and Solidarity).

An indication of the belligerent feelings in Solidarity was the fact that this ultimatum was the “moderate” position, for which Walesa was able to get agreement only after an all night session in which he threatened to walk out. At the outset of the debate a majority of the worker delegates favored a general strike with no prior warning strike.⁹

The ensuing preparations for a national strike reflected an unprecedented level of planning and coordination for civil opposition in Poland. Each of the regional Interfactory Founding Committees (MKZs) moved into a large factory where they set themselves up to remain for the duration of the strike period, however long it might turn out to be. Many of the Solidarity commissions at individual factories did the same. Around-the-clock guards were set up at each occupied factory site. In effect, the countryside became dotted with worker fortresses. A Solidarity radio station transmitted news and instructions each morning, and printing presses turned out pamphlets for nationwide distribution, all aimed at ensuring nationwide coordination and synchronization. U.S. intelligence reporting on these developments described them as an apparent effort by the union to block the regime’s ability to resort effectively to its ultimate course of martial law.¹⁰

A meeting on 25 March between Walesa and Deputy Prime Minister Rakowski proved fruitless, and two days later the warning strike took place as scheduled, from 0800 to 1200. In terms of numbers of participants, not to mention unity and discipline, it was the largest strike in the thirty-six-year history of the Soviet bloc. The discipline was demonstrated in the fact that a clear demarcation was set and observed; essential services such as

9. “Poland: Pivotal Meeting Today,” decl. *NID*, 25 March 1981; “Poland: Further Talks Slated,” decl. *NID*, 26 March 1981; “Polish Union Divided On New Strike Action,” *NYT*, 24 March 1981, A3; “Polish Strike Set If Meetings Today Brings No Gains,” *NYT*, 25 March 1981, A1; Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 123–25; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 154–55.

10. “Poland: Possible Turning Point,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 25 March 1981; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 156.

health facilities, national oil pipelines, armaments factories, and national rail lines were kept in operation. Such day-to-day services as local transportation, however, were shut down. In what was a particular affront to the regime, a sizable number of party members who also belonged to Solidarity participated in the strike. The union had dramatically demonstrated what it was prepared to carry out on a sustained basis four days later if its demands were not satisfied.¹¹

At the same time, in contrast to Solidarity's demonstration of its power and its ability to coordinate on a national scale, the Polish party seemed on the verge of coming apart. A Central Committee plenum was set up for Sunday, 29 March, amid rampant rumors that it would be an acrimonious session likely to include a challenge to Kania's leadership. It lived up to expectations, lasting well into the morning hours of the next day, and by all accounts was dominated by bitter recriminations. At one point the prominent hard-liners Olszowski and Grabski, along with one other Central Committee member, offered their resignations. By the end of the session the resignations had been withdrawn, but there were credible reports that it had taken intervention from Moscow to prevent them from being accepted. In any event, on the eve of the threatened nationwide general strike it was Solidarity rather than the regime that appeared to hold the strength, except in one category—armed force.¹²

A Staged Provocation?

The consensus of Solidarity's leadership, as well as of Western media and U.S. intelligence analysts and policy officials, was that the Bydgoszcz incident had been a set-up by Polish hard-liners for the specific purpose of provoking Solidarity reactions that could be exploited to justify martial law. The reported attempts by Olszowski and Grabski to invoke martial law at the 22 March Politburo meeting appeared to confirm that view. The *National*

11. "Polish Workers Stage Nationwide Strike," *NYT*, 27 March 1981, A1; "Millions in Poland Go on 4-Hour Strike to Protest Violence," *NYT*, 28 March 1981, 1; Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 125-26; Ascherson, *Polish August*, 265; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 157.

12. "Polish Leaders Continue Meetings in 'Good' Climate," *NYT*, 29 March 1981, 1; "Polish Ruling Body Reaches An Impasse On Averting Strikes," *NYT*, 30 March 1981, A1; Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 128-32; Ascherson, *Polish August*, 265-66; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 158. For the allegations of Moscow's intervention, see "Brezhnev Phone Call Said to Have Protected Hard-liners in Poland," *NYT*, 14 April 1981, A1; and Weschler, *Passion of Poland*, 183.

Intelligence Estimate on “Poland’s Prospects” for the first half of 1981 had concluded that one of the potential events most likely to precipitate a Soviet military intervention would be “a general strike of some duration to which the Polish regime did not respond decisively.”¹³ This was in effect a forecast that a full-blown general strike would compel the Polish regime to choose between imposing its own forces or being subjected to a Soviet intervention. The Bydgoszcz incident led many to believe that some Polish hard-liners shared this judgment, and had staged the incident to force Kania and Jaruzelski into exactly that position.¹⁴

The same views were even expressed by moderates within the Polish party. One, who was chairman of the Polish Journalists Association, made the charge on 23 March in an “open letter” to his party: “Our hard-liners stand for no program except the concept of confrontation and disinformation . . . they are trying to involve the whole party leadership and government in a clash with the entire society. With incalculable consequences, *they are trying to provoke society to behavior justifying the use of force*” (emphasis added).¹⁵

The details that emerged over the next few days as to what actually transpired at the meeting hall in Bydgoszcz certainly seemed most consistent with the provocation theory.

- The farmers and Solidarity representatives did not *intrude* into the Provincial Council Hall; they were *invited* to send a delegation of six representatives to the 19 March meeting, which they were told would take up their grievances. These grievances were not listed on the formal agenda for the Council meeting, but the farmers and solidarity representatives were told they would be raised under “other business,” to provide an opportunity for arguing their case.
- The Council meeting abruptly adjourned, however, with no reference to the Rural Solidarity issues, and no call for tabling “other business.” The presiding officials all departed the hall. It was then that the pro-

13. “Poland’s Prospects Over the Next Six Months,” *NIE* 12.6–81, 2.

14. For the views of Western observers and reporters, see the articles by John Darnton, “Scattered Strikes In Poland Protest Attacks on Unionists,” *NYT*, 21 March 1981, 1; “Warsaw Talks Set For Today On Crisis Over Police Attack,” *NYT*, 22 March 1981, 1; “Sense of Despair Over Poland,” *NYT*, 24 March, A3. Also Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 138; Ascherson, *Polish August*, 264; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 152–54. For the view of the U.S. Intelligence Community, see Gates, *From the Shadows*, 229.

15. “Open Letter to PZPR by Stefan Bratkowski, 23 March 1981,” full text in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 210–12.

testers declared their intent to stage a sit-in. A large contingent of regular council delegates remained behind to talk with the protesters. When these delegates learned the reason that the Rural Solidarity group was there, they persuaded the group not to stage the sit-in by agreeing to work out a joint statement calling for a special meeting of the Provincial Council to address the farmers' complaints.

- While negotiations were underway on the wording of a joint statement to this effect (and according to most accounts on the verge of agreement), a large force of police entered the meeting hall and ordered the premises vacated under threat of force. The farmers and their Solidarity supporters instinctively resisted, and it was then that the violence occurred.
- The police actions inside the meeting hall, beginning with the politely expressed initial order to depart, and all the ensuing contentious reactions of the protesters were conveniently recorded on tape.
- During the time that negotiations were in process between the farmers' representatives and the delegates who had remained in the meeting hall, the telephone lines to those inside the building were cut off. Thus the people who were trying to find out what was happening, one of whom was Walesa, and who might have counseled a safer conduct, were unable to get through.

This description was for the most part eventually acknowledged, albeit in terms less indicative of culpability, in the report of the minister of justice that Jaruzelski had assigned to investigate the events, and that report was broadcast on Polish TV on 28 March.¹⁶

The fact that these events took place while Jaruzelski and Kania were off the scene (Jaruzelski at the Soyuz 81 exercises and Kania visiting Budapest) added credence to the theory that the incident was rigged to force their hand. And their actions after it took place, including the publication of the minister's report, strongly suggest this was their interpretation as well. There has been some speculation of various schemes and of who might have played a role. To date, however, no evidence has been released by intelligence agencies or obtained from the records of former Warsaw Pact countries to confirm or disprove definitively the interpretation of a deliberately contrived provocation.

16. Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 122; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 151–52. The full text of the minister's report is presented in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 86–98.

But whatever its origins, the Bydgoszcz incident and the reactions that it provoked did indeed appear to U.S. intelligence analysts at the time to have filled out the stage setting for imposition of force:

- Martial law plans already had been recently tested, updated, and passed along to the Soviets.
- The command, communication, and logistic measures that would facilitate introduction of outside forces were in the process of being deployed through the *Soyuz '81* exercises.
- And now, an excuse for implementing the martial law plans had been provided.

The scheme also appeared to have achieved its intent of putting Jaruzelski into a trap with little room for slipping out. The Intelligence Community saw little prospect that he could accede to all of Solidarity's demands—to agree at the same time to identify and punish those responsible for the Bydgoszcz incident and to close all pending legal actions against political dissidents. If he did not accede, and Solidarity did not give some room, the strike seemed unavoidable. If the strike occurred, it was hard to see any option for the regime at that point other than the imposition of some form of martial force. In a statement representative of the widespread perception, the U.S. press reported that "Western diplomats believe that if talks fail and the strike goes ahead on 31 March, the Polish government will declare a state of emergency [martial law]."¹⁷

The Intelligence Community agreed, summing up this dilemma with the conclusion that "the chances have increased markedly that the regime will impose martial law, even though doing so [lacking any element of surprise] risks provoking widespread disorder and a military intervention by the Soviets." It was precisely because of the likely disastrous outcome of a martial law attempt, however, that the intelligence analysts did not completely rule out "another capitulation by the government," saying that "some in the regime may be prepared for greater compromise, believing the Soviets still want to avoid military intervention."¹⁸

17. "Millions in Poland Go on 4 Hour Strike . . .," *NYT*, 28 March 1981, 1.

18. "Poland: Possible Turning Point," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 25 March 1981.

Positioning the Military Forces?

For intelligence analysts, the gloomy outlook from the political dynamics in Poland was reinforced by actions that made the *Soyuz '81* exercises look increasingly like a cover for positioning Soviet and other Warsaw Pact military units to support the imposition of martial law. By 26 March it had become clear that the exercise had been extended for an indefinite period. A command and communications network had been activated that could be used for directing military operations in Poland while bypassing normal Polish military communications networks. Three Soviet General Staff operations groups, the very kinds of groups that would employ these networks, had been moved into Poland. There were also signs that Soviet, East German, and Czechoslovak units carrying out maneuvers near the Polish borders were receiving fresh troops (although U.S. intelligence showed that—contrary to some public accounts—these forces had not crossed into Poland).¹⁹

On 27 March, the same day that Solidarity carried out its warning strike, the U.S. defense attaché in Bonn, West Germany, reported that a knowledgeable source—probably from the Polish military attaché mission—had said he had reason to believe “a state of emergency [martial law] would be declared by Prime Minister Jaruzelski over the weekend of 28–29 March.” Some of the reasoning given by the source reflected questionable perspectives—for example, that Solidarity was in a weakened state and that momentum was with the party. On the other hand, the source was able to confirm that the consensus among military liaison officers from the other Warsaw Pact capitals also was that a military suppression was imminent, and that some Soviet military contacts reportedly were saying that they expected their forces to be called upon to actively support the Polish effort. The report from Bonn quoted one Warsaw Pact military representative—who had accurately dismissed U.S. public warnings of a military crackdown in December 1980—as now saying that such a move “is coming and is coming fast.”²⁰ Additional information would shortly be received through

19. Initial reporting of the extension of *Soyuz '81* is described in “Poland: Further Talks Slated,” decl. *NID*, 26 March 1981; “U.S. Warns Russians and Poles on Force Against Union,” *NYT*, 27 March 1981, A1; “Haig is Troubled By Soviet Moves On Polish Border,” *NYT*, 30 March, A1; “U.S. Asserts Soviet Steps Up Readiness to Move on Poland,” *NYT*, 4 April, 1. For the description of what was known of other activities, see Gates, *From the Shadows*, 230. Kuklinski subsequently described these preparations in his 1987 interview; see “Suppression of Solidarity,” 88–89.

20. “Weekend of 28–29 March Ominous For Poland, USDAO Bonn, 271138Z Mar 81, Bonn GE 06212,” *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*. For speculation as to the source, see Kramer,

sensitive intelligence channels that revealed the basis for this outlook by so many Soviet and East European military representatives.

At the end of March, the Intelligence Community repeated its earlier warning that “The deepening crisis in Poland has markedly increased chances that the Polish government will impose martial law and that the Soviets might subsequently intervene militarily.” Photography revealed four Soviet divisions in the western USSR (one in the Baltic district and three in the Carpathian area) being fleshed out with reservists. Preparations for movement of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and field artillery also were observed at a nearby railroad loading yard.²¹

These activities could be rationalized as part of the *Soyuz '81* exercises, but the forces involved also seemed to match up with what had been described as the intervention forces for the scenario back in December. And compared to the situation in December, the readiness of Soviet forces for movement—with the command, communications, and logistic infrastructure already in place because of the ongoing exercises—was significantly higher. The intelligence reporting on these developments concluded that “if the Poles request immediate Soviet assistance . . . a limited Soviet force could participate with little or no warning.” This “limited” force was described in the intelligence assessments as consisting of about twelve divisions, including some drawn from the fully manned Soviet forces based in East Germany and perhaps Czechoslovakia.

At the same time, however, the intelligence assessments also said—as they had during the December confrontation—that “the risks to the Soviets [of such a move] would be high . . . because a small force might not be able to cope with potentially rebellious elements in the Polish army and an aroused population.” The actions of the Soviets and their hard-line sympathizers in Poland had clearly increased the readiness for martial law, but they also had eliminated whatever hope they might have had for a surprise move.

Intelligence analysts continued to estimate that a Soviet force designed to contend with such risks would contain thirty or more divisions. The analysis said that a major intervention by such a force, whether “at the request of the Polish regime or solely at Moscow’s initiative would require

“Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis, 1980–81,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 48.

21. “Poland: Warning of Intervention,” decl. *NID*, 28 March 1981; “Poland: Concessions Cause Tensions,” decl. *NID*, 31 March 1981; “Photographic Summary,” decl. CIA Memorandum, 30 March 1981.

large scale preparations lasting ten to fourteen days. . . . Preparations for [such] a major intervention would exceed those of last December and would include an extensive mobilization of reservists and civilian vehicles and other large scale logistical activity.” No signs of such a buildup had yet been reported.²²

Most of this intelligence was publicized in late March and early April in a steady stream of U.S. warnings to Warsaw and Moscow of the consequences of introducing force. The day before Solidarity’s warning strike, the U.S. administration, having learned that the *Soyuz ’81* exercises had been extended indefinitely, released a statement saying, “The United States has watched with growing concern indications that Polish authorities may be preparing to use force to deal with continuing differences in that country. We are similarly concerned that the Soviet Union may intend to undertake repressive action in Poland . . . any external intervention or any measures aimed at suppressing the Polish people . . . could have a grave effect on the whole course of East-West relations.” A State Department official was quoted as saying, “all signs are bad . . . the Warsaw Pact exercises have been extended and the Russians have the infrastructure to move into Poland very, very quickly.”²³

On the day the warning strike was carried out, Secretary of State Haig publicly described the potential for martial law, while Secretary of Defense Weinberger warned of Soviet military intervention. Weinberger declared that “if the Russians go into Poland, that would end any possibility of any useful or effective disarmament or arms limitation talks.” On 29 March, Haig referred in a TV interview to intelligence reporting on the movement of fresh Soviet troops, and the establishment of a command and communications structure by the Soviets in collaboration with the Polish leaders to circumscribe potential opposition among the Polish military.²⁴

The United States soon learned from Kuklinski that on 27 March—the same day that the U.S. defense attaché in Bonn was reporting that East European sources there were expecting martial law to be imposed soon—a group of about thirty senior Soviet military officers and KGB officials had flown into Warsaw to review the martial law plans with the Polish leadership. During these meetings, the military delegation was headed by Marshal Kulikov, who had already been in Poland for some time for the *Soyuz ’81*

22. Ibid.

23. “U.S. Warns Russians and Poles on Force Against Union,” *NYT*, 27 March 1981, A1; and “Statement on Poland,” *NYT*, 27 March 1981, A9.

24. “Allies Said to Agree With U.S. On Poland,” *NYT*, 28 March 1981, 5; “Haig is Troubled By Soviet Moves on Polish Border,” *NYT*, 30 March 1981, A1.

exercises. The KGB delegation was led by Deputy Director Vladimir Kruchkov, head of the First Chief Directorate, which had responsibility for foreign intelligence. A group from the Soviet State Planning Commission (Gosplan) also arrived, led by its chairman, Nikolai Baibakov.

According to Kuklinski, the Soviets pushed for a number of changes in the plans that Jaruzelski had passed to them during his trip to Moscow in early March. The Soviet officials argued that when martial law was declared, the Polish constitution should be suspended and supreme authority transferred to a military command. They also sought changes in the timing and procedures for the arrests that were to precede the formal declaration of martial law, and insisted that Soviet military and security officers be placed as “advisors” in all components of the national and regional commands charged with implementing the martial law. In effect, Moscow seemed to be seeking to impose a forceful crackdown using Polish forces under Soviet direction, and to use the crackdown as a cover for introducing at least some additional Soviet forces into Poland. The Soviet delegation pressed Kania and Jaruzelski to set a date for implementing the plans.²⁵

The Poles not surprisingly resisted many of the proposed changes, but at the end of the day agreement was reached on the text of three joint planning documents that were then signed by the Polish leaders and the Soviet representatives. With the very limited amount of detail from Kuklinski’s reporting that has been declassified, there remains some ambiguity as to how much of the specifics of what had been agreed in the three documents was known by the United States at the time. What *is* a matter of public record is that Kuklinski was involved in the preparation of the plans and that he reported the discussions to Washington intelligence agencies. Knowledge of those discussions added to the emerging picture of impending martial law.²⁶

A Respite . . . ?

On the evening of 30 March, Polish television broadcast a joint announcement by the government and the union that an agreement had been reached and that the threatened strike had been suspended. The government acknowl-

25. The arrival and composition of the Soviet delegations and the nature of the discussions are described by Kuklinski, “The Suppression of Solidarity,” 87–88. The fact that Kuklinski reported this to the CIA at the time is described by Gates, *From the Shadows*, 230.

26. Much of what was in these three planning documents is now known from the Polish archives. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 11, translator’s note 121.

edged that the police actions at Bydgoszcz constituted a violation of legal rights, and agreed to carry out a full investigation, to suspend those under investigation until a decision was reached on responsibility, and to place before a tribunal those who were found to be responsible. The government also made a commitment to expedite parliamentary passage of the law governing free trade unions, and to submit to the parliament a draft law for registering the private farmers' union. Rural Solidarity would be permitted to function as a de facto union until the new law was officially passed. (This law finally went into effect on 10 May.) Workers who participated in the four-hour warning strike on 27 March were granted full pay for the time they were on strike, although no general commitments were made regarding wage payments to participants in past or future strikes.

The announced terms of the agreement were more ambiguous on Solidarity's demand for implementing the Gdansk provisions for security and rights of free speech for union members, saying only that the matter would be submitted to a parliamentary commission for debate. And the announcement made no mention of Solidarity's demand for closure of cases pending against political prisoners arrested between 1976 and 1980. Walesa was said to have claimed that Solidarity got "70 percent" of what it sought in the agreement.²⁷

Over the next two days (31 March–1 April) a fierce debate took place within Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission. The terms of the agreement were criticized for being too vague on what the government would do in investigating the Bydgoszcz incident, and offering nothing on the release of political prisoners and on a standing policy for wage payments to strikers. Once again, however, the most strident criticism was levied not at the substance of the agreement but the means by which it was negotiated. Walesa was again accused of taking too much authority on himself, this time with the added dimension that he had taken it upon himself to speak for the farmers. Some members of Solidarity's National Coordinating Commission tendered their resignations, some of which were later withdrawn, and some of which were taken.²⁸

27. The full text of the joint agreement is given in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 99–101. A description of how it was publicly presented at the time is in "Polish Strike In Abeyance as Pact is Signed," *NYT*, 31 March 1981, A9, including Walesa's "70 percent" remark. This *NYT* article says a commission was ordered to look into the issue of political prisoners, but no such provision is in the actual agreement text.

28. "Divisions Over Polish Agreement," *NYT*, 2 April 1981, A1; "Workers Criticizing Polish Party Chief," *NYT*, 4 April 1981, 5; Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 127; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 160–62.

Anger notwithstanding, Solidarity's National Commission ratified the cancellation of the strike by a vote of twenty-five to four, with six abstentions. The vote seemed to reflect the Commission's belief that whatever its unhappiness with the terms of the agreement, reinstating the strike call would be extremely difficult, and even if it were somehow successful it would leave Kania and Jaruzelski no room to avoid turning to martial law. Indeed, throughout the negotiations the regime had used multiple channels to convey the message that if a way could not be found to head off the strike, martial law would be the regime's only recourse. On the eve of the decisive round of the talks, Walesa received this same message from representatives of the Catholic church, and from some of his own advisors.²⁹

Kania and Jaruzelski appear also to have seen themselves about to be pushed into a situation in which they would have little choice other than to impose a forceful crackdown. And it is likely that their reluctance to be pushed into such action was reinforced by the evidence that the Bydgoszcz incident had been staged for the precise purpose of forcing their hand. While they did not yield on all of Solidarity's demands, they did concede more than many observers thought they would or could. In a preemtory move to deal with grumbles over the concessions, Jaruzelski circulated a written "Commentary" explaining why the concessions were not as great as they seemed. (Many of the terms he cites in defense of the agreement are the same ones that were criticized by Solidarity members who wanted to reject the agreement.)³⁰ There seems little question, nonetheless, that Kania and Jaruzelski shared with Walesa the concern that they would not be able to control events once the general strike began.

The U.S. government's immediate reaction seemed to signal that it believed the crisis had passed. A State Department spokesman was quoted on 31 March as saying that the fresh Warsaw Pact troops whose deployment in the exercise had earlier prompted a note of alarm did not appear to be moving to the Polish border, and that the U.S. expected tensions to ease. The next day an administration spokesman said the Soviets were not expected to enter Poland. The press was also informed that the United States was examining options for rewarding the Polish government for continued restraint. Among the options mentioned were extension of \$200 million of

29. Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 127, especially note 32; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 159. For a unique perspective on the Church's interventions, see also Gates, *From the Shadows*, 231.

30. "Commentary to the Joint Statement of 30 March 1981, Cde. Jaruzelski to Politburo Members," 2 April 1981, *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*.

additional commodity credit in addition to the \$670 million already granted for the year; supplying Poland with surplus dairy stocks, emergency donation of wheat under food-for-peace legislation, and further rescheduling of Polish debt.³¹

. . . and a False Alarm

Just as the U.S. administration was conveying its perception that the crisis appeared to be receding, the U.S. Intelligence Community suddenly escalated its warning of a Soviet military intervention. An *Alert Memorandum* disseminated on 3 April stated:

We believe that the Soviet leaders have become *convinced* by the evident impotence of the Polish party and government leaders *that military intervention is necessary*. They have set preparations in motion and would have the capability to move in *considerable force* within forty-eight hours. We believe it likely that they would want to have stronger forces than they could move that quickly and that it would take about another seven days to have the thirty or so divisions needed if the Poles were to resist. We do not know whether they have reached a final decision to act, but this decision could come at any time and the decision could be to take the Poles by surprise. If this should be the case, *there could be a move this weekend* (emphasis added).³²

The resonance of this *Alert Memorandum* with policy officials was enough to cause Secretary of State Haig to consider postponing his trip to the Middle East scheduled to begin that evening. According to Haig, he and his advisors, at the end of what he has described as a “long day” tracking the evidence through the State Department operations center, reached a conclusion that “whatever Moscow’s purpose . . . it did not include on this Friday an invasion of Poland.” Late that evening he boarded a plane for Cairo.³³

31. “U.S. Expects Tensions in Poland to Ease,” *NYT*, 31 March 1981, A9; “No Sign Russians Will Exploit Reagan Shooting to Enter Poland,” *NYT*, 1 April, A1.

32. “Poland,” *Alert Memorandum*, decl. *NID*, 3 April 1981. In a departure from normal practice, the text of this *Alert Memorandum* was included in the *NID* the same day it was sent by the DCI to senior policy officials.

33. Alexander M. Haig Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan, 1984), 243–44.

The judgments presented in this *Alert Memorandum* had in fact been contested by some CIA analysts at the time it was being drafted. There was no evidence that additional divisions had been mobilized beyond the four that had been reported a few days earlier. The Soviet “considerable force” that the 3 April *Alert Memorandum* said was ready to move in “forty-eight hours” was essentially the same one that had been described as recently as 31 March as a “limited force” that the Soviets could introduce with little or no warning. The earlier reports had described this force as consisting of about twelve divisions—including the four that had been mobilized in the western USSR. (Secretary Haig refers to this twelve-division force in his account of the reaction to the intelligence reporting.) The 3 April *Alert Memorandum* described the force as twelve to twenty divisions, with the high side of the spread based on the possibility of a larger input drawn from the Soviet forces in East Germany, which required no mobilization of reservists.³⁴

The issue in contention among the analysts was not whether the Soviets were positioned to introduce such a force suddenly. They had clearly postured themselves to rapidly move the forces that they had already mobilized. Additional preparatory steps that the *Alert Memorandum* cited as increasing the readiness for moving forces included logistic enhancements, movement of helicopters and other transport aircraft into Poland in what appeared to be flight patterns designed to evade Polish radar, and movement of various components of the ground combat units toward the Polish borders. The continued operational status of the special command and communications system was also cited as enabling the Soviet forces to move on short notice. There were even reports that Soviet forces permanently based in Poland had sent detachments to Warsaw to provide increased security for the Soviet Embassy and residential compounds there.³⁵

34. As was described above, the posture of the four Soviet divisions was initially reported in the *NIDs* of 28 and 31 March, and in a CIA “Photographic Summary,” 30 March 1981. The “twelve division” statement was given in the 31 March *NID* report. Haig refers to the twelve-division force in his description of the 3 April *Alert Memorandum* in *Caveat*, 244.

35. Many of the details regarding military activities have been redacted from the declassified intelligence documents from this time frame. The descriptions given here benefit from the author’s participation in the meeting at which the text of the *Alert Memorandum* was debated. Moreover, former Secretary of State Haig gives the same description in *Caveat*, 243–44. The same description of the Soviet moves is given by Gates, *From the Shadows*, 230, although he does not explicitly refer to a report of 3 April. Kuklinski also described these steps in his 1987 interview. See “Suppression of Solidarity,” 88.

The issue under debate among the analysts was the willingness of the Soviets to inject a force of this size without collaboration from the Polish forces. All of the preparatory steps were fully consistent with Soviet anticipation of martial law, as had been described in the warning issued a few days earlier. Conversely, the absence of preparations of a larger force was inconsistent with plans for a unilateral invasion. All of the previous analysis had come to the same conclusions regarding the risks of committing a limited force of only twelve to twenty divisions under conditions that did not include assured collaboration by Polish leaders. Even with Polish collaboration, not employing or at least readying a larger force was viewed by most CIA analysts as risky. The *Alert Memorandum* said the benefits of taking the Poles by surprise was one of the reasons the Soviets might make their initial move only with the smaller force that could be rapidly deployed. Conditions in Poland at that time, however, seemed to pretty well rule out the prospect of surprise.

This lack of any indications of additional forces being readied led the same dissenting analysts to question the unequivocal nature of the *Alert Memorandum* judgment that the Soviets had been “*convinced . . . that military intervention is necessary.*” Virtually all analysts acknowledged that—leaving aside the issue of imminence—it was entirely plausible that Moscow had in fact become persuaded that military intervention was necessary. Such a conclusion would in fact have been a natural product of the propositions set forth in the *NIE* on Poland done two months earlier. That *NIE* had concluded that Moscow would not allow the present situation in Poland to continue indefinitely, and that if the regime showed no convincing progress in gaining control of events, the Soviets would conclude intervention was necessary and would accept the costs.

There was certainly justification for concluding the Polish party’s control over events had continued to deteriorate, and that the regime was showing no signs of being willing to implement the forceful crackdown Moscow deemed necessary. The case for a Soviet decision that intervention was necessary was thus logically sustainable. Nonetheless, in the views of some analysts, the lack of physical evidence left far more room for uncertainty on the Soviet outlook than was reflected in the *Alert Memorandum*.

The divergence of this latest intelligence alert from the substantial volume of preceding intelligence assessments was reflected in the diverse accounts propagated through the media in the next few days. The day after the *Alert Memorandum* was disseminated, press accounts citing “U.S. officials” described “new preparations” that would enable the Soviets to intervene

with military forces “at a moment’s notice.” Some of the same articles, however, cited other sources within the Administration as saying that intelligence showed the Soviets were not mobilizing more divisions in the western USSR, and that “there was no evidence” that a decision had been made to intervene. One article presenting the diverse views referred to a “late night meeting” on 3 April, which sounds very much like Secretary Haig’s “long day.”

The same pattern of conflicting stories continued to appear in the press through the weekend, with increasing detail. On 5 April the Administration let it be known that the President had sent a letter to Brezhnev admonishing him against extending the joint Warsaw Pact exercises into an invasion of Poland. “Government officials” were quoted as saying that a force of “twelve to twenty divisions” could be inserted quickly. One article even gave a breakdown of Soviet divisions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the western USSR that could make up a rapid-insertion force of this size. At the same time, however, some U.S. officials were quoted as believing this force was insufficient for situations other than as backup to Polish martial law. The press also carried the intelligence assessment that it would take about thirty divisions for a unilateral intervention, and that another ten days or so would be required to mobilize and prepare this larger force believed necessary for a unilateral intervention.³⁶

By Monday, 6 April, CIA products had returned to describing Polish martial law as the more likely near-term threat, although considerable attention was still directed at the high state of Soviet readiness. Intelligence information on 6 and 7 April showed the high state of readiness was sustained, but no mobilization of additional forces was reported. On 7 April the Soviets announced that the end of the *Soyuz '81* exercises.³⁷

For another few days, concern over various forms of military crackdown continued to be voiced both in intelligence reporting and in official public statements. Defense Secretary Weinberger continued to warn of the possibility of some form of Soviet invasion, and the NATO defense ministers

36. Press samples where this information can be found include, “U.S. Asserts Soviet Steps Up Readiness . . . ,” *NYT*, 4 April 1981, 1; “Preparedness for Movement Into Poland Now Complete,” *NYT*, 4 April 1981, 5; “U.S. Weighing Aid to China If Russians Act Against Poland,” *NYT*, 5 April, 1; “Russians in Poland: Signs of Alertness,” *NYT*, 5 April 1981, 3; “U.S. Aides Say Buildup Needn’t Signal Move on Poland,” *NYT*, 5 April 1981, 4; “Reagan Note to Brezhnev Tells of Concern About Poland,” *NYT*, 6 April, A1.

37. “Poland: Increased Preparedness” decl. *NID*, 6 April 1981; “Poland: Martial Law Under Consideration,” decl. *NID*, 7 April 1981; and “Continued State of Readiness,” decl. *NID*, 8 April 1981.

issued a statement warning Moscow of the consequences of military intervention. But by then the concerns were abating, and Secretary Haig was quoted as being “relieved.” On 8 April press articles began to offer various speculations as to what had transpired. Had an intervention had been planned but called off? Had forces had been positioned for a contingency? Had the Soviets had been engaging in a bluff to force the Poles to act? Some Western experts outside the government were described as believing that some form of forceful crackdown was still the likely outcome over the longer term.³⁸

On 9 April, the President was sent a CIA assessment that essentially reversed the judgment of the 3 April *Alert Memorandum*. Drawing on Kuklinski’s reporting, it described the intense pressure that Moscow was exerting on the Poles to declare martial law, and the Polish leaders’ so far successful resistance to it. The DCI attached a note pointing out Moscow’s dilemma. He said it was clear that the Soviets were aware of the immense costs of a unilateral intervention, but faced a threat to the entire Soviet system and military alliance if some forceful suppression action was not ultimately imposed. Given these bleak choices, the DCI’s memo concluded, “before sending divisions in, they will move heaven and earth to get the Poles to crackdown themselves.”³⁹

38. “Reagan Note to Brezhnev Tells of Concern About Poland,” *NYT*, 6 April 1981, A1; “Brezhnev Has Talks in Prague as Crisis Deepens in Poland,” *NYT*, 6 April 1981, A1; “Weinberger Sees Poles Threatened With Invasion By Osmosis,” *NYT*, 7 April 1981, A1; “Brezhnev Expresses View That Poland Can Solve Its Crisis,” *NYT*, 8 April 1981, A1; “Soviet Intentions In Poland: What Happened?” *NYT*, 8 April 1981, A1; “Former Officials Gloomier Than Reagan,” *NYT*, 8 April 1981, A1; “NATO Defense Aids Issue Joint Warning to Soviets on Poland,” *NYT*, 9 April 1981, A1.

39. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 231.

Chapter 9: A Close Call?

The release of official documents from the archives of the former Soviet Union and other states of the former Warsaw Pact military alliance have included many records of deliberations related to imposing force in Poland in the spring of 1981. Accounts by Polish and Soviet participants in the events have also been made public. These sources clearly confirm judgments made from the evidence available at the time that Moscow was going all out to push the Polish regime into implementing martial law.

Soviet Prodding

The intent to exploit the March Soyuz '81 exercises as a means of pressuring the Poles was discussed at a Soviet Politburo session in mid-January, two months before the exercises were slated to begin. Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov stated then that "we need to apply constant pressure on the Polish leadership," and he recommended to his Politburo colleagues that the exercises being planned for mid-March be "boosted" ("pripodnyat") to make clear to the Poles that Moscow had "forces ready to act." Ustinov made this recommendation during a discussion of the assessment of the situation in Poland that had been carried out a week earlier by the visiting groups of Soviet political and military officials. Their report accused the Polish leaders of continuing to resist Moscow's demands for adoption of "emergency measures" (the euphemism for martial law). Ustinov recommended that the Soyuz '81 exercises be exploited as part of an effort to "apply constant pressure on the Polish leadership and constantly get after them." The same goals of pushing the Poles "to resort to more decisive measures" was the subject of a conversation between Brezhnev and East German Party First Secretary Honecker during the CPSU Twenty-Sixth Congress held at the end of February.¹

1. CPSU Central Committee Politburo sessions for 22 January and 12 March 1981 (when

Several sources describe direct, intimate Soviet involvement in the preparation of the Polish martial law plans, including participation of senior Soviet military and KGB officers in the Polish martial law test game conducted 16–18 February. The Soviet military participants in the test game were led by Army-General Anatoliy Gribkov, who was first deputy commander and chief of staff of the Combined Warsaw Pact Forces (i.e., Kulikov's principal deputy). The KGB group was headed by Deputy Director Vladimir Kryuchkov. Whether the Soviet participation consisted of "advising" or "overseeing" depends on whose account is accepted.²

This was essentially the same contingent of Soviet military and KGB officials that was back in Warsaw at the height of the turmoil on 27 March, discussing refinements to the martial law plans with Polish leaders and demanding an expanded role for Soviet "advisors" in implementing the plans. The size and apparent composition of this combined Soviet delegation (about thirty officers, according to Kuklinski) suggests that Moscow may have been seeking to insert the advisors right then. Kania told the Polish Politburo that Brezhnev had telephoned him that same day to urge him to exploit the Bydgoszcz incident to impose martial law.³

This delegation of senior Soviet military and KGB officers remained in Warsaw for at least another week. Marshal Kulikov told East German Defense Minister Hoffman on 7 April, the day the *Soyuz '81* exercises were officially concluded, that the Soviets had in fact "placed an array of specialists" from the General Staff and KGB in Warsaw in mid-March. He said that although the *Soyuz '81* exercises were formally ended, no order was to be given "for now" to withdraw the staff of the combined forces and "other organs of the Soviet Union . . . one should not relinquish the seized positions." Kuklinski has said that the command and communications system that the Soviets set up for the contingency of an intervention to support Polish martial law remained in place until the end of 1981.⁴

Brezhnev described the Honecker conversation to the Politburo), in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*.

2. Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, translator's note 149, describing Gribkov's account in "Doctrina Breshnev: I pol'skii krizis nachala 80-kh godov," published in *Voeno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, Moscow 1992, 48–49. Kramer also cites post-facto accounts by Kania, and by Vitaliy Pavlov, who was the chief Soviet KGB officer based in Warsaw at the time.

3. Kania's report of this phone call is given in "PZPR Protocol 83, 27 March 1981," in Wlodek, ed., *Tajne Dokumenty*, 320. See also Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, translator's note 121.

4. Record of conversation between Kulikov and DDR Chief of General Staff Hoffman

Soviet hopes for, or expectations of, martial law were also indicated by their efforts to get the Poles to postpone the semiannual turnover of conscripts scheduled for 12 April. Some 52,000 conscripts who had completed their two-year mandatory service were due to be released and replaced by a new draft. Ustinov considered this to be important enough to raise it at a Soviet Politburo meeting in Moscow on 2 April. Kulikov told East German Defense Minister Hoffman that the Soviets had tried to persuade Jaruzelski to put the conscription off until 27 April. It is difficult to conjure up an explanation of why a two-week extension of the two-year active duty service of the lowest ranking Polish soldiers would receive such high level Soviet attention, except as a contingency for some action in early April.⁵

The frustration expressed by Soviet officials after the Polish leaders reached the agreement with Solidarity on 30 March agreement is itself an indication that Moscow was expecting a forceful crackdown of some kind. At the same 2 April Soviet meeting where Ustinov had raised the issue of postponing the conscript turnover, for example, Brezhnev led off by angrily asserting that “the [Polish leaders] listen and agree with our recommendations, but in practice do nothing.” He said that on the day the agreement was reached with Solidarity over the Bydgoszcz affair, he had admonished Kania in a phone conversation over the Polish leaders’ continued failure to fulfill their promises, saying that “you need to take decisive measures, . . . you can’t keep making endless concessions to Solidarity.” He characterized the avoidance of the general strike as “capitulation to the opposition.” At the same Soviet Politburo meeting, Gromyko unequivocally stated that “the [Polish] leaders went back on their word in what they had promised us.”

At another Soviet Politburo meeting one week later, Ustinov said “as you know, they did not want to back down on the Bydgoszcz conflict, but then they did” (emphasis added).⁶ The central topic at the Politburo meeting was a meeting Ustinov and Andropov had recently had with the Polish leaders.

on 7 April in Legnica, Poland, Document from DDR archives, Militärarchiv Zwischenarchiv Potsdam, ANZ 32642, translation in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*; Kuklinski, “Suppression of Solidarity,” 89. The fact that the delegation of senior Soviet officials was still in Poland a week later is indicated by Ustinov’s comment at the 2 April Soviet Politburo session that some officers from that delegation were to meet with the Polish military leaders at 8 P.M. that night. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 11.

5. Record of conversation between Kulikov and Hoffman, 7 April 1981; *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

6. Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations on the Polish Crisis*, documents 11 and 12; Record of conversation between Kulikov and Hoffman, 7 April 1980, *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

The Clandestine Meeting

On the evening of 3 April, a Soviet aircraft picked up Kania and Jaruzelski to transport them to a meeting with Andropov and Ustinov in a rail car near Brest, in the western USSR. The meeting began at 9 P.M. and lasted until 3 A.M. the next day. Stories that there had been some such meeting were circulating at the time, but the details were kept secret.⁷

Many subsequent accounts of the meeting have drawn on Jaruzelski's description in his memoirs, and have understandably tended to portray it having taken place at Moscow's initiative, to provide a forum for a verbal thrashing aimed at pushing the Poles to go ahead with martial law. Unless the minutes of the 2 April Soviet Politburo session have been completely doctored, however, the meeting was at the request of the Polish leaders. Three participants in this meeting (Brezhnev, Ustinov, and Gromyko) made separate references to accepting the Polish request for a meeting. (This was the occasion when Ustinov raised the issue of extending the length of duty of the Polish conscripts due to be discharged.) The record concludes with the statement “[A] decision is made . . . to approve the request of the Polish comrades to hold a meeting.”⁸

Kania and Jaruzelski were at the time under fire both from their own party hard-liners and from Moscow for backing down from the expected imposition of martial law, and for having “capitulated” to Solidarity. The Soviets had already set up the military structure to support a Polish military crackdown and to insert backup forces if that should prove necessary. The large delegations of Soviet military and KGB “advisors,” led by the Warsaw Pact commander in chief and the chief of the KGB foreign intelligence directorate, were still in Warsaw at the time, applying pressure on the Polish leaders.

Under these circumstances, it would have been understandable for the Polish leaders to have requested a meeting with higher-ups in Moscow—in effect to go over the heads of the senior Soviet officials in Warsaw who

7. Kuklinski, “Suppression of Solidarity,” 88. For rumors in Warsaw on Jaruzelski’s “travel to meet with other Communist leaders,” see “Poles Put Off Special Session of Parliament,” *NYT*, 5 April 1981, 3. A reflection of the secrecy surrounding the meeting is Kuklinski’s statement in his first public interview six years later that indicated he still was under the impression the Polish leaders had gone to meet with Brezhnev.

8. Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 11. Jaruzelski’s version is given in his book *Les Chaines et Le Refuge* (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattes, 1992), 253–57, and examples of interpretations of his version are in Rosenburg, *Haunted Land*, 192, and Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 65.

were not going to cease applying pressure until ordered to do so by Moscow. At the same time, it is also not surprising that the two Polish leaders would have undertaken the trip with trepidation. They were fully aware of how much the Soviets were counting on them to do something they were going to try to justify not doing. They clearly would have been anticipating verbal beatings at a minimum. The entrapments and arrests that had been carried out on Hungarian and Czechoslovakian leaders in 1956 and 1968 could have called up even worse images.⁹

The Soviet motive in agreeing to the meeting is also clear from the discussion at the 2 April Politburo session. Andropov, for example, pointed out the need “to find some way of exerting greater influence on the [Polish] leadership.” In recommending that the Poles’ request for a meeting be accepted, he said “we can urge them to adopt severe measures and not to be afraid of what might result, possibly even bloodshed.” Gromyko pointed out the value of the opportunity “to convey everything to the Polish [leaders] on a personal basis.” Several participants in the Politburo discussion advocated the meeting as an opportunity to gauge the intentions and commitment of the Polish leaders. Brezhnev and Ustinov raised the possibility, depending on the outcome of the meeting with Kania and Jaruzelski, of convening another Warsaw Pact summit—“a meeting of the Seven at the highest level”—presumably along the lines of the 5 December Moscow meeting.¹⁰

The account of the Brest meeting given by Andropov and Ustinov at the follow-up Politburo session on 9 April fully substantiates Jaruzelski’s version of the verbal pounding that was administered. The Soviets harangued the Poles for continually backing down and making concessions to Solidarity. They said that martial law would enable the Polish party to “smash the . . . counterrevolutionary forces . . . and put an end once and for all to the strikes and anarchy in economic life,” and they asserted that it could have been implemented long ago.

The Poles countered that it was “impossible to introduce martial law” in the existing circumstances, and that the introduction of troops from the outside to assist was “absolutely impossible.” They indicated that they could not rely on their armed forces, especially if foreign troops were introduced.

9. Soviet General Gribkov accompanied the two Polish leaders as they boarded for their trip to the meeting. His account of their trepidation is described in Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations on the Polish Crisis*, translator’s note 143.

10. Session of CPSU CC Politburo, 2 April 1981, Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document II.

Ustinov said that in response to his question of “why they had changed their decision on [the] Bydgoszcz [incident] . . . , they asserted that the threat of a general strike was hanging over them.” Kania, according to Andropov, said “recent events, particularly the warning strike and the events in Bydgoszcz, had shown that the counterrevolution is stronger than we [the Polish party] are.”¹¹

This was not the first time the Soviets were hearing this argument. The Polish leaders had tried to make the same case to Marshal Kulikov in the days following the contentious Polish party session on 29–30 March. Kulikov told the East German defense minister that both Kania and Jaruzelski had separately told him they could not rely on their army and security forces in the kind of critical situation that could erupt in the existing circumstances. Kulikov said the Poles had “subtly” indicated to him that “it could even be possible, in the event of an invasion by other Warsaw Pact troops, certain [Polish army] units might rebel.”¹²

At the meeting in Brest, Andropov and Ustinov presented the Polish leaders with documents that were in effect implementing directives for the martial law measures that had been set out in the planning documents already agreed upon and signed at the meeting of delegations in Warsaw a few days earlier. These implementing directives included blanks for dates that were to be filled in when the documents were signed, and the Soviets were demanding that the Poles sign them and fill in the dates for carrying out the plans. Moscow was clearly trying to lock the Polish leaders into a commitment from which they could not—or so the Soviets apparently hoped—back down. According to Andropov, the Poles, after some bobbing and weaving, agreed to “look over and sign [the] document[s]” on 11 April.¹³

A week later Marshal Kulikov (who had returned to the USSR after the Soyuz ’81 exercises ended) was back in Poland to meet with Jaruzelski on 11 April, as had been agreed at Brest, to get the signed and dated implementing documents. Jaruzelski put him off for two days, claiming an over-

11. Session of CPSU CC Politburo, 9 April 1981, Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations on the Polish Crisis*, document 12.

12. Record of conversation between Kulikov and Hoffman, 7 April 1981, *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

13. Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations on the Polish Crisis*, document 12. The references in the discussions of what was to be signed shift back and forth between singular “document” and plural “documents.” This may simply be a reflection of the difficulties of written records of oral accounts. Kuklinski used the plural.

loaded schedule. Jaruzelski was depressed, according to Kuklinski, over the prospect that he might yet be forced to impose some scaled back version of martial law, and was considering short-term detentions of the most extreme activists as a kind of middle ground between capitulation and the drastic steps being pushed by Moscow. The U.S. Intelligence Community also reported at this time that Jaruzelski was preparing to declare some limited form of martial law.¹⁴

By the time Jaruzelski met with Kulikov on 13 April, however, his confidence had been bolstered by reactions to a speech he had made to the parliament on 10 April, calling for a two-month moratorium on strikes. The parliament had passed a resolution calling for the moratorium, and much of the Polish populace had reacted favorably to it. Solidarity's leaders, while reserving the right to strike where the union's "fundamental interests were threatened," also had clearly indicated that they wanted to comply with the two month moratorium, and that they would discourage strikes. When Jaruzelski and Kania finally did meet with Kulikov, they refused to sign and date the implementing documents.¹⁵

The Polish Sidestep

According to Kuklinski, Jaruzelski had been assuring the Soviets in various exchanges since well before he handed them martial law plans at their meetings in Moscow in early March that he was resolved to impose a military suppression. He also had tried to convince the Soviet leaders, however, that it was necessary to wait until the "ratio of forces" improved somewhat, until Solidarity lost some of its popularity and the government could gain some support. He also continually insisted there was a need to deal with weaknesses in the military and security forces that would have to be relied on to impose the crackdown. Kuklinski has said the Soviets dismissed this argument by asserting that they were prepared to "alter the unfavorable ratio of forces by sending in their divisions and even Czech and East German divisions."¹⁶

14. Kuklinski, "Suppression of Solidarity," 89; "Poland: Increased Preparedness," decl. *NID*, 6 April 1981; "Poland: Martial Law Under Consideration," decl. *NID*, 7 April 1981.

15. Kuklinski, "Suppression of Solidarity," 89; Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 151.

16. Kuklinski, "Suppression of Solidarity," 86-87. Kuklinski was directly engaged in preparing materials for these exchanges.

All the evidence from Kuklinski and from the Soviet records support Kania's and Jaruzelski's accounts that they saw themselves being squeezed into a trap by the combined wedges of Soviet pressure, the Bydgoszcz provocation, and Solidarity's reaction. They believed that if the threatened nationwide general strike was launched, they had no real alternative to calling a state of emergency and attempting to impose some form of forceful solution. It is also clear that they feared that the outcome from that would be violence and bloodshed that could well include rebellious splits in the army and security forces, all of which would result in the insertion of sizable forces from the USSR and other Warsaw Pact "allies." Slipping out of this trap was viewed at the time as having been a close call. The information in records that are now available provides some glimpses of the maneuvers the Polish leaders resorted to in this escape.

At the time, the general perception from the outside was that the *Soyuz '81* exercises, which were originally due to end on 23 March, had been prolonged by Moscow. Soviet motives were believed to be, at a minimum, to use the exercises as a means of applying pressure on the Poles, and in the worst case as a cover for pre-positioning an invasion force. According to what Marshal Kulikov told East German Defense Minister Hoffman on 7 April, however, the exercises had been prolonged at the specific request of the Polish leaders. He said the Polish leaders wanted "to show Solidarity and the KOR that the Warsaw Pact countries were prepared to render Poland help." He also said that Kania and Jaruzelski had even tried to have the exercises extended further, beyond 7 April, but the Soviets had turned them down because of the negative international attention that had already been evident.¹⁷ (One could speculate that the "negative attention" became a factor *after* Moscow had come to accept that Kania and Jaruzelski were not going to undertake martial law, at least not then.)

Jaruzelski and Kania would have had every reason to play up the threatening image fostered by the prolonged exercises. Faced with the likely costs of the martial law they probably would be forced to invoke if a general strike took place, they were willing to pay a higher price in terms of concessions to Solidarity than most had expected. They could not, however, concede to all of Solidarity's demands; they needed to come away showing

17. Record of conversation between Kulikov and Hoffman, 7 April 1981, *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*. For examples of the commonly held view, see Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 148. Also "U.S. Warns Russians and Poles on Use of Force," *NYT*, 27 March 1981, A1; "Millions in Poland Go on 4-Hour Strike," *NYT*, 28 March 1981, 1; and "U.S. Weighing Aid to China If Russians Act Against Poland," *NYT*, 5 April 1981, 1.

they had drawn a line. For that, they had to convince Walesa and other Solidarity leaders that the Union also needed a way out of the looming collision, and that it was worth giving some ground to find the way out. By all accounts, the Polish leaders' ability to convincingly portray martial law—accompanied by Soviet military intervention—as the likely alternative to compromise was a central factor in producing the agreement on 30 March that averted the strike.

Even after that compromise was achieved and the strike was called off, the specter of a hovering Soviet invasion would have strengthened Jaruzelski's hand in getting Solidarity to tacitly sign on to his parliamentary initiative for a strike moratorium. He needed this breathing space to gain time to work on correcting the "unfavorable ratio of forces." This could have been why he and probably Kania sought to have the exercises extended further, at least until after his initiative with the parliament.

The threat of a unilateral military intervention appears to have been—at least for that time—more bark than bite. In addition to the intelligence on the status of the Soviet forces, the records of discussions by senior Soviet leaders' contain no hint that they were prepared at that time to undertake an invasion if the Poles failed to launch their own crackdown. On the contrary, Marshal Kulikov told the Polish leaders that the Soviets assumed "that unless the Polish security organs and army would be deployed, outside help cannot be expected, for otherwise considerable international complications would result." According to the East German record of Kulikov's account of his discussions with Kania and Jaruzelski, he told them that "their common goal should be to solve the problems without the deployment of allied armies into Poland." He said he "emphatically brought it to the attention of the Polish comrades that they have to try first to solve their problems by themselves. If they cannot do so alone and then ask for help, the situation is different from one in which [outside] troops had been deployed from the outset."¹⁸

This record of Kulikov's conversation has received a fair amount of attention in various post-Cold War discussions of what Jaruzelski was given to believe the Soviets *would* be willing to do if he needed assistance.¹⁹ The flip side, however, is what it seems to say about what they were *not* prepared

18. Record of conversation between Kulikov and Hoffman, 7 April 1981, *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

19. See, for example, Kramer, "Jaruzelski, the Soviet Union, and the Imposition of Martial Law in Poland: New Light on the Mystery of December 1981," *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 8.

to do, at least at that time. With due caution regarding the uncertainties about the circumstances and motives of Kulikov's statement, it would seem on its face to have also informed Jaruzelski that he had some leverage for fending off Moscow's prodding. If the Soviets were in fact strongly adverse to a unilateral military intervention by their own forces, they were probably willing to grant Jaruzelski more space and time in the hope of getting him to enforce his own crackdown, a goal for which they would continue to harangue him.

It seems quite plausible that this helped stiffen Jaruzelski's stance during the confrontation in the rail car at Brest. It also could have contributed to his willingness, after seeing signs that he was going to get some breathing space in the domestic confrontations, to stonewall on signing and dating the implementing documents for martial law. This refusal was a reversal of what the Soviets considered to have been a commitment given by the Polish leaders at Brest to sign the documents.

At one point in the Brest meeting, according to the Soviet records, Jaruzelski "again" offered to step down from the position of prime minister. The Soviets told him that it was "essential for him to remain . . ." Jaruzelski's offers to step down have been interpreted by many as indicating his wish to be relieved of a job in which he might find himself compelled to employ Polish forces against Polish citizens. An equally plausible explanation, however, especially in view of his actions over the longer term, is that he was in effect challenging the Soviets. He had repeatedly promised to carry out the martial law measures, but insisted that it be done in a time and way he judged offered the best chance of success without at the same time provoking violent confrontation on a scale that would leave permanent, historical scars. He offered the Soviets the choice of allowing him latitude to follow the course he thought best, to produce a result they both wanted, or to replace him.

At that juncture, the Soviets as a practical matter had no credible alternative to Jaruzelski for effectively implementing their preferred solution of Polish martial law. His stature as the leader of the Polish military was unrivaled. He had been defense minister for thirteen years and a member of the Politburo for more than a decade. His resignation from the prime minister position almost certainly would have been universally seen as resulting from his refusal to comply with Moscow's insistence on the use of force. The Soviets may have been indulging in some self-deceit about the reliability of the Polish military for imposing martial law, but they could have had no illusions over the negative impact Jaruzelski's removal would have

on the cohesiveness of those forces. And if Jaruzelski left the prime minister's post because of what would amount to open opposition to the use of force, it is hard to see how he could be kept on as defense minister. Removing him from that post because of opposition to Soviet pressure for use of force could well result in open divisions in the military.

Jaruzelski was not at that point opposing the Soviets on the issue of whether martial law should be imposed. He was insisting that attempting it right then could be disastrous, and that it would take time to create the circumstances and cohesion in the forces necessary to bring it about in a way that would contain the costs. For Moscow, the alternatives would have been to find someone to replace Jaruzelski and then try to go through the process of rebuilding a cohesive force for martial law, or mount their own invasion. Conceding some time for Jaruzelski to live up to his promises would have readily qualified as the least bad option.

This outlook is reflected in the records of Soviet deliberations in the aftermath of the Brest meeting. On 9 April, after hearing some members of the Soviet Politburo muse about other possible Polish leaders, Ustinov said that, problems notwithstanding, "we still need this pair—Kania and Jaruzelski—to stick together and strengthen their relations." At another session a week later, Brezhnev said that that it was important in dealing with the Poles not to "badger them without need." He said "we should avoid making them so nervous that they throw up their hands in despair. On the other hand, we should exert constant pressure and tactfully draw their attention to the errors and weaknesses in their policy." He also suggested preparing a "broader . . . strategic analysis, which will permit us to stand back from the daily flow of events and take a longer-term perspective."

When this "strategic analysis" was presented to the Politburo a week later, it included the judgment that with regard to Kania and Jaruzelski, "Both of them, especially Jaruzelski, enjoy authority in the country. At present, there are in fact no other officials who might take over the party and state leadership." The evidence suggests that Jaruzelski also sensed this perspective and played his hand accordingly.²⁰

Taken together, the evidence now available makes a strong case that there was indeed a very high risk in late March and early April that some form of military crackdown would be imposed in Poland. All of the evidence shows the risk then to have been much more of a reality and much closer

20. Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, documents 12 and 13.

to occurring than was the case in December 1980. That it did not happen appears to have been mainly because the Polish leaders found a way out of a trap (with some assistance from Walesa and the Catholic church).

One could even speculate that it was the creation of the trap itself that ultimately thwarted the imposition of a Soviet-engineered Polish martial law crackdown. Polish hard-liners appear to have over-played their hand with the Bydgoszcz incident. They probably saw it as a device to close off any room Kania and Jaruzelski might have sought for retreating from the crackdown. But instead it inflamed Solidarity to burrow into a fortress posture that seemed to insure that any attempted use of force would be bound to result in widespread violence and bloodshed. In effect, the staging of the Bydgoszcz crisis created the very kind of situation in which Kania and Jaruzelski were most determined to avoid resorting to force.

Intelligence in Hindsight

On balance, the intelligence information and analysis at the time holds up well in the light of what is now known. The 3 April *Alert Memorandum* seems to have been an outlier. And unlike the case in the late months of 1980, even after the 3 April *Alert Memorandum* was disseminated, the Intelligence Community did not allow the invasion scenario to lock out equal consideration of others, and the evidence continued to be weighed against the spectrum of possibilities. Less than a week after that *Memorandum*, for example, the DCI sent another to the President that seems to have been right on the mark in its description of Soviet motivations and efforts to force the Poles into imposing martial law. Indeed, had martial law occurred in the circumstances that existed at the time, it would have been perfectly legitimate to characterize it as Soviet intervention—in its planning and execution and in the near certain involvement of Soviet troops.

The strongest endorsement of the intelligence assessment of the situation in Poland and the risks of martial law seems to come from Jaruzelski and Kania. Their apparent assessments of the consequences of attempting martial law and of the leverage they had with the Soviets are very close to those of the Intelligence Community.

Much of this intelligence record is unquestionably the result of the insights provided by the incredibly well placed human intelligence source, Ryszard Kuklinski. None of the declassified CIA documents identify information employed in the intelligence assessments of the events at the time as specif-

ically coming from Kuklinski, but Gates makes very clear that much of the insight on the potential for Polish martial law was in fact based on Kuklinski's reporting. (This author can offer the same testimony.) Many of the Soviet moves and Polish martial law deliberations that both Gates and Haig describe as having been learned of at the time are the same ones Kuklinski later described in his public interview. They were mainly the kind of low visibility, covert activities for which human sources provide a unique window.

It is certainly true that quite aside from secretly acquired intelligence, the circumstances in Poland in March and April were such that the potential for some kind of military action was obvious to anyone paying attention to what was going on. The burgeoning, national-scale opposition to the regime by workers, peasants, and students, the Bydgoszcz provocation, and the publicly announced Warsaw Pact military maneuvers left no room for questioning the potential dangers. There is also no doubt, however, that the intelligence was used by the U.S. administration to intensify the media spotlight. On the general issue of a military crackdown, no one can be accused of crying wolf, because the wolf was indeed in the vicinity. The wolf did not attack, but no one could have claimed to have been surprised if it had.

What effect U.S. policy had on the outcome is always difficult to determine even with the benefit of hindsight. What is clear is that the fact that Solidarity was prepared and had plans for resisting martial law was one of the deterring factors for Kania and Jaruzelski. Solidarity and the Polish populace certainly did not need the United States to point out the dangers of a military crackdown. Nonetheless, the aggressive public stance by the United States and its allies kept the issue under a spotlight. Kulikov's comments to Jaruzelski about why Moscow was insisting that the Poles take the initiative also seems to reflect that the message was getting through to Moscow and the other Warsaw Pact capitals.

Part III: Marching to the Endgame,
April-December 1981

Chapter 10: Liberalization Infects the Party

From mid-April to about mid-July 1981, the level of confrontation between the regime and Solidarity was relatively constrained—certainly by comparison with the preceding nine months. To some extent this was result of the union's tacit agreement to abide by Jaruzelski's call for a strike moratorium in his 10 April speech to the parliament. It also was a reflection of increased sensitivity of the leaders on both sides to the risk that even relatively narrow confrontations could erupt into conflicts with potentially disastrous consequences. Equally important, however, was that both the party and the workers union were then grappling with internal challenges.

Kania and Jaruzelski were struggling to contain a defiant reform movement in their party's grass roots, while simultaneously preventing party reactionaries from exploiting the struggle for their own hard-line purposes. The status of Polish United Workers Party and the authority of its leaders had already been severely eroded by their demonstrable inability to rein in Solidarity. But before Kania and Jaruzelski could hope to rebuild the party to where it could undertake decisive measures, they had to stem the damaging centrifugal forces being generated by the party's rebellious reformists and combative reactionaries.

Solidarity, meanwhile, was organizing its own internal structure and preparing for its own elections. Heated debates were already underway within the union over how to define its leadership's mandate for negotiating and making commitments for the rank and file. Even more fundamental was the question of how Solidarity would define itself—as a trade union focused on defending workers' concerns, or as an acknowledged political organization with a proactive role in the formulation of social and economic policy and management of the economy. The pressures from this latter question would intensify through the summer, as the already dismal economy continued to decline.

Both the party and Solidarity were preparing for their respective congresses. For the party it was to be an “extraordinary” congress, which had been called for back in the middle of the crisis of late 1980 for the express

purpose of addressing the demonstrable failures in party policies and economic performance that had given birth to Solidarity. For Solidarity, it was to be its first “national” congress, and would be the first occasion where its operating statutes and rules and its identity as a political entity would be debated in such a forum. These congresses would shape the identity and character of the regime and the union that would confront each other later in the year.

The reform effort within the party was spearheaded by what had become known as the “horizontal movement.” Its genesis was the effort by factory-level party organizations to replicate the lateral coordination employed by Solidarity’s interfactory committees. A network among lower echelon party groups had begun to coalesce as far back as the fall of 1980, and had almost immediately begun pressing for a fundamental overhaul of the party election statutes. Its principal goal was to enable individual party units to put forward their own nominees and conduct their own elections for leadership posts at each echelon, rather than merely voting their approval of a list of candidates submitted from the top. A group of reformers quickly seized on this as the system that should also be applied for electing national party leaders. They argued that party organizations at individual enterprises should be empowered to nominate and elect their own delegates to assemblies at the regional level, and that these regional assemblies should then follow the same process to select delegates for a national congress. Under the same system, the national congress would be required to conduct open nominations and hold secret votes to elect a Central Committee and the top party leaders.¹

On 15 April 1981, just as the storm over the *Soyuz '81* exercise was settling, the horizontal movement held a formal meeting to endorse a set of reform proposals for submission to the party’s upcoming congress. This gathering was held in Toruń (about equidistant from Warsaw and Gdansk) and was attended by 750 delegates of Polish party organizations from at least eleven provinces. The delegates agreed on a package that included the earlier proposals for a bottom-up electoral system and horizontal links between party organizations, and also called for all delegates to the upcoming party congress to be elected by secret ballot from a list of nominees put together by the voting organizations. Other recommendations included lifting censorship on grass roots initiatives, making changes in the Politburo

1. For further background on the origins of the “horizontal movement,” see Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 89; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution, 1980–81*; Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 23–24.

and Central Committee Secretariat, limiting terms of office for party officials, establishing procedures to enforce accountability, and restricting the practice of allowing individuals to hold offices simultaneously in the party and government.²

The same day that these proposals were publicized, Kania said publicly that he agreed that there was a need for greater democracy, but he emphasized even more the need to rebuild the party's internal cohesion and its power and authority for effective action. A party Central Committee meeting two weeks later provisionally endorsed—subject to ratification at the party congress—somewhat watered down versions of many of the horizontal movement's proposals, including free nomination of candidates by lower party echelons and secret ballots. Competing nominations from the top down would continue to be permitted, however.³

U.S. intelligence analysts described these developments as indicating the Polish party leadership was moving on a “moderately reformist course in response to growing demands from the rank and file.” The leadership’s acceptance of liberalized election laws, according to intelligence analysts, was designed to demonstrate a general commitment to reform, and to defuse pressures from lower levels. According to one intelligence assessment, the party leaders may also have believed they could still manipulate the outcome of elections for the higher-level positions. This intelligence analysis also pointed out, however, that rank and file reformers were not going to be satisfied with half measures, and would press for greater change and more influence at the party congress. “The pressure has become more intense, more public, and more organized,” according to the intelligence analysis, and the reformers believed they could use the new election rules to oust opponents of further reform.⁴

A *New York Times* article of 16 April described the reformist course as more than “moderate,” saying that “should such a democratization movement

2. “Poland: Soviet Commentary,” decl. *NID*, 16 April 1981; “Polish Communist Party Faction Appeals for More Freedom in Party System,” *NYT*, 16 April 1981, A1. Other accounts give different numbers—e.g., Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 172, says thirteen provinces, and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 212, says fourteen provinces.

3. “Party Plenum,” decl. *NID*, 30 April 1981, and “Poland: Soviet Treatment of Kania’s Speech,” decl. *NID*, 1 May 1981. The proceedings of this party plenum meeting were publicly released at the time by the Polish party. See Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 319, note 13. Kania’s remarks as presented in the Polish media (*Trybuna Luda*, 17 April 1981) are described in Raina, *Poland, 1980*, 212–13.

4. “Poland: Soviet Commentary,” decl. *NID*, 16 April 1981; “Poland: Reform in the Party,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 23 April 1981.

ever gain significant power, it would be as revolutionary to East European communism as the work of Copernicus . . . was to science.”⁵ What was particularly noteworthy was that this referred not to the democratization movement being pushed by Solidarity but one driven from within the party itself. Moscow clearly shared this view.

One week later a Soviet delegation led by senior ideologue Mikhail Suslov (a Western press account characterized him as a “symbol of Kremlin orthodoxy”) arrived in Warsaw to meet with senior Polish leaders. The CIA’s *National Intelligence Daily* reported that this delegation, led by a “veteran hard-liner,” was carrying a message to Polish leaders to rein in the budding liberalism that was infecting their party. The intelligence report pointed out that the tenor of the discussions with the Suslov delegation was reflected in the fact that the communiqué issued at the end of the visit did not include the standard line about Soviet “confidence” in the Polish party’s ability to control the pace and scope of change. The same intelligence report said Suslov had tried to persuade the Poles to postpone their upcoming party congress, out of concern that in the existing conditions the reformists might be able to grab significant power. The analysts nonetheless doubted—correctly as it turned out—that Kania could or would agree to a postponement, although they expected that he probably would use the demonstrable Soviet prodding to strengthen his hand for resisting more radical reforms.⁶

The day after Suslov returned to Moscow, the Soviet media ran a tirade charging that the Polish party was being threatened by “revisionism” from within, and labeling the horizontal movement structures as “contrary to democratic centralism.” A TASS article said a campaign to discredit Polish party leadership was being waged by “revisionist elements within party ranks . . . who would like to paralyze the party of the Polish communists as the leading force in society.” An intelligence report on the article pointed out that the term “revisionist” was “one of the most serious charges the Soviets can level against another communist regime,” and that Moscow had used it to describe Czechoslovak party liberals before the invasion in 1968. U.S. press reports said much the same, characterizing the charge as defining one of

5. John Darnton, “Polish Communist Party Faction Appeals for More Freedom in Party System,” *NYT*, 16 April 1981, A1.

6. “USSR-Poland: Suslov in Poland,” decl. *NID*, 24 April 1981. Much the same was in “Suslov Arrives Unexpectedly in Poland for Discussion,” *NYT*, 24 April 1981, A9 (including the “Kremlin orthodoxy” quote); and “Suslov, Ending Talks, Silent on Poland,” *NYT*, 25 April 1981, 3.

the “gravest ideological heresies” in the Marxist-Leninist dogma.⁷ Nonetheless, less than a week later the Polish party affirmed that its congress would begin on 14 July.

Near the end of May, Soviet fears of the potential impact of the revised voting procedures seemed to have been realized. Early results of elections of delegates to the party congress showed established apparatchiks were losing to unknowns. Moscow renewed its attacks on the party “revisionists,” and for the first time linked them with the “antisocialist forces” in Solidarity, claiming they had formed a “united front” to undermine the party. Similar media rhetoric was fired from other Warsaw Pact capitals.⁸

In a move that proved to be counterproductive, Soviet media also gave favorable treatment (partly through selective excepts) to virulent public rhetoric from a fringe reactionary group of Polish party members called the Katowice Forum. This included accusations that the Polish party had lost its direction because of “ideologically alien influences . . . [and] right wing opportunism and bourgeois influences within the party ranks themselves.” The Soviet media neglected to mention that the Katowice Forum’s diatribe also included charges that “revisionist” pressures for horizontal structures were being driven by “Trotskyist-Zionist views.”⁹

These charges were fully aired in Poland, however, and for too many Poles they smacked of the virulent nationalistic anti-Semitism they had heard in the intra-party battles of the late stages of the Gomulka era. A storm of criticism followed, not just in the public but in the party as well, and even hard-liner Olszowski had to publicly disassociate himself. The party Politburo issued a public rebuttal on 2 June. Two days later the Katowice Forum announced it was suspending its activities, although that did not prevent the Soviet media from continuing to cite the validity of the ideological attacks. Western media speculated that the Forum had been created with covert backing (from the Soviets? East Germans? Polish hard-liners?) as a mechanism to spearhead a counterattack on the reform faction in

7. “Poland: Moscow Condemns Revisionists,” decl. *NID*, 27 April 1981; “Kremlin Intensifies Criticism of Poland, Charges Revisionism,” *NYT*, 26 April 1981, 1.

8. “East Germany-Poland: Criticism of Warsaw,” decl. *NID*, 22 May 1981; “USSR-Poland: Criticism of Polish Party,” decl. *NID*, 23 May 1981; “USSR: Options in Dealing with Poland,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 29 May 1981; and “USSR-Poland: More Criticism of Polish Party,” decl. *NID*, 3 June 1981.

9. “USSR-Poland: More Criticism of Polish Party,” decl. *NID*, 3 June 1981; “Strike Alert Set at Polish Factory,” *NYT*, 2 June 1981, 1; “Moscow Publicizing Hard-Line Polish Statement,” *NYT*, 3 June 1981, A6.

the run-up to the party's extraordinary congress.¹⁰ No information has to date been made public that would confirm or refute this. If true, it would seem to have been another case of a hand overplayed.

The U.S. Intelligence Community concluded that the main impact of all this rhetoric was to galvanize the reformers even more and to "further weaken the already feeble conservative forces in the Polish party." The virulent public attacks by the Soviets and their allies were interpreted by analysts as a reflection of Moscow's increasing fear that the upcoming party congress would ratify a sweeping liberalization of the party and oust most of its current leaders. If the pressures being exerted did not begin to show signs of reversing what Moscow apparently saw as a growing trend, intelligence analysts expected the Soviets to make another bid to have the congress postponed.¹¹ The analysts did not have to wait long for Moscow's next move.

A Blast from Moscow

On the weekend of 6–7 June, stories began appearing in Polish and other East European media that the Polish leaders had received a letter from the Soviets containing an "ultimatum." A special meeting of the Polish Central Committee, at which the letter was to be the major topic, reportedly had been scheduled for 9 June. The day before the meeting, the contents of the letter began to be leaked to Western reporters. According to various accounts, it had arrived on 5 June and included harsh criticisms leveled directly at Kania and Jaruzelski by name, accusing them of repeatedly backing down from their promises to take action to control the situation. The letter was also said to have declared that the Soviet bloc countries "would not leave Poland 'at the mercy of counterrevolutionaries,'" a statement the Western press interpreted as another veiled threat of intervention.¹²

10. "Polish Leaders Denounce Hard Line Party Group," *NYT*, 4 June 1981, A10. For further background on the reactionary groups in Poland, see Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 154–56; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 174–75; and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 208–10, 213–16. Among the many descriptions of the "anti-Zionst" attacks of the late 1960s is Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 588–90.

11. "Poland: Tensions Rising Again," decl. *NID*, 5 June 1981; "USSR-Poland: Open Polemics," decl. *NID*, 6 June 1981.

12. "USSR-Poland: Soviet Pressure," decl. *NID*, 8 June 1981; "Amid an Increasing Sense of Crisis, Polish Leaders Call a Meeting," *NYT*, 8 June 1981 A1; "We Will Not Let the Poles Alone, Russian Warns," *NYT*, 9 June 1981, A1. The story first appeared in Warsaw in *Tribjuna*

The *NID* described the letter as a manifestation of the desire of the Soviets, in concert with Polish hard-liners, to provoke a showdown over the reformist movement within the party. Intelligence analysts presumed the Soviet leaders intended their letter to encourage Polish conservatives to take control, and the analysts allowed for the possibility, though rating it unlikely, that it might result in Kania's ouster and a postponement of the party congress. At a minimum, according to this intelligence analysis, the letter could provide the Soviets with a device for testing whether the reform process was out of control and whether Kania had the means or the will to oppose it.¹³

When the Polish party meeting convened on 9 June to discuss the letter, Kania took his usual middle road stance. He described Soviet concerns as justified and promised more resolute action, but at the same time he insisted that the party congress would take place as scheduled and said he continued to support moderate reforms. The next day the Party Central Committee reconvened to address the "problems" described in the letter. This session erupted into an open power confrontation between hard-liners and what intelligence analysts and the Western press both described as "moderates" grouped around Kania. Grabski led the hard-liner attack, calling for Kania's removal as first secretary of the party. He asserted that the present composition of the party leadership led by Kania was not capable of leading the party out of its political crisis.

During the ensuing acrimonious arguments, Kania called a pause to consult with some of the other Politburo members and then proposed that the Central Committee hold a vote of confidence for each of the eleven members of the Politburo (which would include Grabski and Olszowski as well as himself). Any member who received less than 50 percent of the votes would agree to resign. As Kania had doubtless anticipated when he made his gamble, the Central Committee backed down from holding the vote. According to press reports the meeting ended in a swell of support for Kania and Jaruzelski. Intelligence analysts pointed out, however, that while the moderates could justifiably see the outcome as a victory, it also had intensified the polarization in the party.¹⁴

Luda, 6–7 June 1981. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 15, translator's note 179.

13. "Poland: Central Committee Plenum," decl. *NID*, 9 June 1981.

14. "Poland: Kania's Speech," decl. *NID*, 10 June 1981; "Poland: Party Openly Split," decl. *NID*, 11 June 1981; "Polish Leader Says Soviet Bloc Alarm is 'Fully Justified,'" *NYT*, 10

The same day that this confrontational meeting was taking place, the complete text of the Soviet letter appeared in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, described as having come from an “unattributed report.” That evening the text was broadcast on Polish TV and a day later it was printed in the Polish media and in the United States. It fully lived up to the descriptions that had been leaked. It also made abundantly clear Moscow’s immediate concern over the potential impact the reform movement within the party could have on the upcoming Extraordinary Congress:

Recently the situation within the PZPR [Polish United Workers Party] itself has become a cause of particular concern. . . . forces hostile to socialism are setting the tone of the election campaign [for the extraordinary congress]. . . . As a result of the many manipulations of revisionists and opportunists—enemies of the PZPR—experienced activists entirely devoted to the party and with irreproachable reputations and morals are being passed over. . . . One cannot rule out the possibility that during the Congress itself an attempt will be made to deal a decisive blow to the Marxist-Leninist forces in order to bring about its [sic] elimination.¹⁵

The U.S. government, in an official statement on 11 June, labeled the letter as “interference in the internal affairs of Poland . . . [and] inconsistent with the Helsinki Final Act.” The U.S. statement noted that no increase in Soviet military activity had been observed around Poland, but added a reminder that Soviet forces in the vicinity “remained in a high state of readiness.” State Department officials were quoted unofficially as saying there was concern that military action might be taken to protect Soviet interests in Poland, and that it was this concern that motivated the United States to make its public objection. A day later, Secretary of State Haig made the same points in a public statement during a stopover in Hong Kong, saying that he feared a Soviet intervention ultimately would occur.¹⁶

June 1981, A1; and “Kania Affirms Role as Poland’s Leader After Soviet Letter,” *NYT*, 11 June 1981, A1.

15. “Text of Letter . . . ,” *Le Monde*, 10 June 1981, 6 (English version available in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report 10 June 1981, “Soviet Union,” FBIS-Sov-81-III). Also “Text of Soviet Letter,” *NYT*, 11 June 81, A8.

16. “Poland’s Crisis . . . ,” *NYT*, 12 June 1981, A1; “U.S. Charges Soviet is Meddling in Poland,” *NYT*, 12 June 1981, A3; “Haig in Hong Kong, Says Situation in Poland is ‘Seriously Deteriorating.’” *NYT*, 13 June 1981, 4.

Outlook: Soviets Invade or Accept Liberalization

As this pattern of events was unfolding in the Polish party, U.S. intelligence assessments began to describe Soviet options as distinctly narrowing. This was reflected in two CIA special analysis assessments disseminated at the end of May.

The first of these, which examined Soviet options for dealing with the developments in Poland, said the liberalization trend in Poland was likely to continue, and that “the Soviets know that liberalization [in Poland] must be brought under control if they are to maintain hegemony in East Europe. . . . It appears . . . likely that the liberalization trend will not be reversed and that Moscow eventually will move to bring the Poles to heel. . . . Moscow also realizes that, at this stage, it would be difficult—if not impossible—to replace Poland’s leaders with stalwarts who could impose tougher policies.” The intelligence assessment thus concluded that Moscow’s choices had been reduced to either “admonishing the Poles . . . or invading with overwhelming military strength.”

Intelligence analysts believed that the enormous costs and risks of an outright military invasion would lead at least some Soviet leaders to continue to advocate giving the Poles “more time to sort themselves out.” The intelligence assessment also pointed out, however, that Moscow had already used political and military pressure tactics without much success, and now confronted a new challenge with the spread of liberalization to the Polish Communist Party itself. “The continuing liberalization, which the party congress may well legitimatize, could force the Soviets to . . . conclude that failing to act decisively would mean forfeiting their last chance to preserve a Soviet-style communist system in Poland.”¹⁷

Another special analysis disseminated a day later examined the likely course of events if the Soviets did not invade Poland. It said “Soviet failure to invade” would lead to a politically liberalized Poland, in which the principal internal issues would be the difficulties faced by the union, party, and church leaders in achieving economic recovery, with a government made up of inexperienced but ambitious individuals. The bulk of this two-and-a-half page intelligence assessment was devoted to the impact of a liberalized Poland on Europe at large, which it described as likely to include:

17. “USSR: Options in Dealing With Poland,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 29 May 1981.

- In other East European societies, contagion and pressures for their own liberalization.
- In the USSR, a mixture of contagion and recrimination.
- In Western Europe, a boost for détente, arms control, and trade.
- In the Warsaw Pact military alliance, a major blow to the viability of its existing strategy and planning.¹⁸

Neither of these two special analysis assessments gave any weight to the prospect of martial law. On the contrary, several intelligence assessments in the ensuing weeks explicitly took martial law off the table of options for suppressing the political challenge in Poland. An in-depth CIA *Intelligence Assessment* disseminated around this same time, for example, said:

There is reason to believe that Soviet leaders may have felt at one time that if Warsaw Pact forces could be inserted into Poland in support of the introduction of martial law by the Polish regime itself, there might be less resistance. . . . However, *we believe that by now the Soviets, in contemplating military intervention, no longer see any viable alternative to an outright invasion*—staged, to be sure, with whatever ‘invitational’ cover could be arranged.

Given the Soviets’ likely assessment of the substantial resistance that Pact forces would encounter, we believe they would feel compelled to employ a large invasion force of at least thirty, and perhaps as many as forty-five, divisions (emphasis added).¹⁹

18. “Europe: Impact of a Soviet Failure to Invade Poland,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 30 May 1981. Another, somewhat longer assessment of the impact of a Soviet failure to invade Poland was disseminated on 18 May 1981. This document has not been declassified, but the fact that it was disseminated is described in the foreword to another document (described in note 19 below) disseminated somewhat later that identifies itself as a “companion piece.” While the conclusions of the 18 May study have not to date been released, its title suggests its assessment of the consequences if Moscow did not invade: “Liberalization in Poland: Impact and Implications.”

19. “Implications of a Soviet Invasion of Poland,” decl. CIA *Intelligence Memorandum*, 2, National Security Archive. The date of this document is obscured by an apparently inadvertent spill-over from an adjacent redaction, but its description of itself as a “companion paper” to the “recent” intelligence memorandum of 18 May indicates its publication was sometime in late May or early June. Other examples of this viewpoint are “USSR-Poland: Officials Deny Imminent Intervention,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 15 June 1981, and “USSR-Poland: Moscow and the Polish Party Congress,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 19 June 1981.

After the failed Soviet effort to engineer Kania's ouster at the confrontational party meetings on 9–10 June, some intelligence assessments went even further. Not only was martial law off the table as an option for suppressing the liberalization movement, it had instead become an option for fending off Soviet efforts at military suppression. A memorandum from the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) to the Secretary of State said that:

Poland's first line of defense against Soviet intervention would be to try to deter it with a show of national unity, which would imply maximum resistance. The Poles might resort to *a declaration of martial law* and deploy Army units around key points, *not to suppress the labor movement but to maximize deterrence by preparing defenses against attack*. (From summary, emphasis added)

As tensions mount, Jaruzelski might additionally invoke a state of emergency or some variant of martial law in order to gird the nation against a threatened Soviet invasion. In late March, it appeared the Poles were thinking of imposing martial law had Solidarity carried out its threat of a nation-wide strike. The Soviets seemed poised to intervene in a supportive role had the Poles proved unable or unwilling to control the situation on their own. *A declaration of martial law now, however, would be different; it would be intended to prevent civil disturbances from developing, thus depriving the Soviets of this pretext for intervention. It would also keep the Polish armed forces in a heightened state of alert, thus enabling them to react more quickly against a Soviet move* (from text, emphasis added).²⁰

A similar description of Polish objectives for implementing martial law was given in a CIA memorandum disseminated on 30 June. Describing the size and disposition of Polish armed forces that might be used to combat a Soviet invasion, the assessment said: "If the Polish leadership . . . imposed martial law prior to an invasion, the military would be operationally organized, armed, and better positioned to offer early opposition [to a Soviet invasion]."²¹

20. "Declassified memorandum to the Acting Secretary of State from INR, 15 June 1981," *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

21. "Polish Reaction to a Soviet Invasion," decl. CIA *Intelligence Memorandum*, 30 June 1981, 2. This CIA assessment was reissued in July in a slightly different format under the title

The prospect of military resistance led from the top added significantly to what both the INR and CIA memoranda described as enormous risks and costs to the Soviets of military intervention. Even so, there was no confidence that this would deter Moscow from taking such action as a last resort. (There was some divergence of views in the CIA on this cost assessment.) Intelligence assessments at this time also reaffirmed the standing estimate that, if the Soviets chose to intervene militarily, their uncertainty over the reaction of the Polish armed forces would lead them to prepare a force of at least thirty divisions. The daily intelligence reports on Poland through the second half of June clearly reflect a “watch” for signs of Soviet preparations for military intervention. Several articles on the subject also appeared in the U.S. press during the next week or so.²²

Unlike the earlier speculation on this prospect, however, the Soviet motivation for military intervention at this point was not attributed to the challenge posed by Solidarity, but the threat of “revisionist forces” seizing power at the upcoming party congress. Intelligence forecasts said that at the upcoming party congress, “the liberalization trend should be ratified and most hard-liners dropped from the Central Committee.” It said the congress “will elect a new and almost certainly more liberal Central Committee, which will in turn choose a new Politburo. This process will give significant additional legitimacy to the reform movement in the party.” Kania’s success in outmaneuvering the efforts by Moscow and Polish hard-liners to replace him, according to this analysis, “created a new situation that puts Kania and the Soviet leadership directly at odds.” The intelligence analysis said these were “compelling developments to those in the Kremlin who would urge a prompt military move into Poland.”²³

“Probable Polish Reaction to a Soviet Invasion.” Both are on deposit at the National Security Archive. Other than the one word “probable” added to its title, and a change in the sequence of three paragraphs, the texts are nearly identical.

22. Samples include “Poland: Continued Political Pressure,” decl. *NID*, 13 June 1981; “USSR-Poland: Officials Deny Imminent Invasion,” decl. *NID*, 15 June 1981; “USSR-Poland: Military Activity,” decl. *NID*, 19 June 1981; “Poland: Soviet Pressure Intensifies,” decl. *NID*, 22 June 1981. Press descriptions are in “Polish Leader Says Soviet Bloc Alarm is ‘Fully Justified,’” *NYT*, 10 June 1981, 1; “Poland’s Crisis: Party Defiant,” *NYT*, 12 June 1981, A1; “U.S. Charges Soviet is Meddling in Poland,” *NYT*, 12 June 1981, A3; “Crisis in Poland: Soviet Forces Formidable,” *NYT*, 14 June 1981, 3; “Soviets and Poland: Options Dwindling,” *NYT*, 15 June, A3; “Young Polish Moderates Emerge in Party Elections,” *NYT*, 17 June 1981, A10; “Polish Rebels Regret: Party Is Seeking Liberal Lead,” *NYT*, 25 June 1981, A2; “Vigil in Kremlin: Tension High as Polish Talks Near,” *NYT*, 27 June 1981, 3.

23. “USSR-Poland: Moscow and the Polish Party Congress,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 19 June 1981.

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was launched to pre-empt an extraordinary congress of the Czech party in which a reformist takeover appeared likely. Now it was the Polish party that was about to hold an extraordinary party congress that appeared both to intelligence analysts and Western reporters as a potential forum for "irreversible changes." Intelligence reports and the Western press pointed out that the letter the Soviet leaders had recently sent to the Poles was very similar to one they had sent to the Czech leadership just before launching their invasion. The situation in Poland was characterized as having "reached the point where the Soviets cannot ignore further Polish defiance." "Soviet persuasion" was said to rest on the credibility of its military threat, and the belief was expressed that if the Soviets wanted to fend off revisionism they would have to act before the Polish party congress. One of the most influential Polish dissidents, Jacek Kuron, was quoted as having said the situation in the Polish party had brought things to a "critical threshold" in which Soviet invasion was no longer impossible.²⁴

No Soviet preparations for military intervention, however, were detected in the weeks leading up to the party congress. Intelligence analysts concluded that Moscow was resigned to allowing the congress to proceed rather than trying to preempt it with military intervention. The reasoning was that the Soviets would prefer first to see if their pressures succeeded in tempering the reform trend at the congress, and then calculate their next move on the basis of the results of the congress and the resulting balance of forces in the Polish party.²⁵

The Party Congress²⁶

The rules that Polish party leaders had finally approved for election of congressional delegates did not completely meet the demands of party reformists for a bottom-up election sequence. The leadership was still permitted to

24. Extensive reporting and interpretation of these issues is presented in the series of declassified intelligence reports and Western press articles cited in note 22, above. Kuron is quoted in "Polish Rebels Regret: Party Is Seeking Liberal Lead," *NYT*, 25 June 1981, A2.

25. "USSR-Poland: Officials Deny Imminent Invasion," decl. *NID*, 15 June 1981.

26. Declassified *NID* articles from 19 June through 23 July 1981 provide almost day-to-day coverage (with time off for Sundays and holidays) of the congress and the events leading up to it. Comprehensive presentations including background on its origins are in Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 179-88; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 174, 178-82; and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 229-36. Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 237-53, also gives the full text of the party program produced at

insert nominations for its preferred candidates for election at various lower echelons, and did so. Nonetheless, the lower party cells were also allowed to nominate competing candidates, and all candidates, whether nominated by the leadership or by the party cells, were to be elected by secret ballot. The upper powers of the party continued to attempt—sometimes successfully—to intervene to skew the vote in favor of their nominees. But by any comparison with the congresses of the other Soviet bloc parties, the delegate selection process for the party's extraordinary congress represented a dramatic departure in the direction of democracy.

The impact was evident in the results of the delegate elections completed by the end of June. Of 1,964 delegates elected, only about 10 percent had participated in previous party congresses. More than two-thirds of the Party Central Committee members, including a few Politburo members, failed to be elected to the congress. Since the congress was to elect a new Central Committee from candidates nominated from its ranks, and the new Central Committee would then elect a new Politburo from its membership, failure to get elected to the congress was a *de facto* removal from the Central Committee and—for those to whom it applied—the Politburo.

Western media reported that most Western and Polish observers interpreted the delegate election results as an indication that the congress was likely to reaffirm Kania's policies of "moderate change." Press reports noted that the biggest casualties in the delegate elections were among the more strident conservatives and more radical reformers. Stories that Kania was about to be "swept aside" were no longer being heard, according to the press. The Intelligence Community now described his position as "strong—at least for the near term."²⁷

This view was reinforced by the announcement that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko would visit Warsaw on 3 July. The *NID* pointed out that Gromyko was not likely to be the individual chosen to carry a stern message. It also called attention to a new tone of moderation in Soviet commentary on the congress, and described the communiqué issued in Warsaw at the end of Gromyko's visit as having a positive tone.

the congress, which was published after the congress concluded in various vehicles, including *Tribjuna Luda*. The three authors cited here (and the Intelligence Community) give slightly different numbers for the delegate breakdown, but not different enough to affect the interpretation of proportionality. An interpretation of the delegate voting results was also presented in "Kania's Role Buttressed by Polish Party Elections," *NYT*, 2 July 1981, A2.

27. "Poland: A Different Party Congress," decl. *NID*, 13 July 1981; "Kania's Role Buttressed . . .," *NYT*, 2 July 1981, A2.

Moscow's reaction reflected a view that while the feared worst outcome had been avoided, the basic problem still had not been resolved. Intelligence reporting pointed out that the Soviet media were still featuring the "Brezhnev Doctrine" message that communism in Poland was a legitimate concern for all Warsaw Pact countries. The Western diplomatic circuit reportedly had concluded that the Soviets were sending a message that they were "grudgingly" willing to accept a Polish party congress that seemed likely to return the moderate regime, so long as that regime would staunchly defend Poland's status as a Warsaw Pact ally and a loyal communist state.²⁸

Once the Polish party congress got underway on 14 July, it produced a further dramatic cut in the number of veteran *apparatchiks* in the central party organs. Of the less than one-third of the Central Committee members who had managed to get elected to the congress, most failed to get re-elected to the new Central Committee; holdovers constituted less than 10 percent of the new Central Committee. And that small list included only four members of the former Politburo: Jaruzelski, Kania, Barcikowski, and hard-liner Olszowski. Politburo members who did not make the cut included three hard-liners—one of whom was Grabski—but also two moderates, including the deputy prime minister who had negotiated the Gdansk agreement.

The new Central Committee then elected Kania as first secretary with about two-thirds of the votes. His token opponent, Barcikowski, received about 30 percent, and about 4 percent of the new Central Committee members either voted no or abstained. The last step was the election of the new Politburo; all four of the former members who had made it through the election of congressional delegates were elected to new Politburo, along with eleven new members. Western media described the election process at the congress, especially the submission of the election of party first secretary to a secret vote of the full assembly, as a first for the Soviet bloc.²⁹

28. "USSR-Poland: Softer Soviet Line," decl. *NID*, 3 July 1981, "USSR-Poland: Emphasis on the Positive," decl. *NID*, 6 July 1981; "Gromyko in Warsaw," *NYT*, 3 July 1981, 3; "Gromyko Confers With Poles Again On Party Congress," *NYT*, 5 July 1981, 1; "Soviet Intentions in Poland Unclear After 3-Day Talks," *NYT*, 6 July 1981, A1; "TV Report Suggests Soviets Will Await Polish Outcome," *NYT*, 13 July 1981, A7.

29. The day-to-day events at the congress were described in the *NIDs* for 15–20 July 1981, all of which are now declassified, as well as in "Polish Communist Chief May Ask Re-Election Vote By Whole Party," *NYT*, 11 July 1981, 5; "Candidates Listed For Polish Congress," *NYT*, 13 July 1981, A7; "Polish Party Split Over Voting Rules," *NYT*, 15 July 1981, A1; "Polish Communists to Select Leader by Secret Ballot," *NYT*, 16 July 1981, A1; "Kania Elected By Poles to Head Party," *NYT*, 19 July 1981, 1.

The Intelligence Community's initial description of the outcome of the congress was relatively positive. The *NID* said Kania—"a moderate favoring incremental reforms with certain bounds"—had been strengthened. It said the Polish party had "emerged . . . with . . . a predominantly new leadership, a greater sense of unity, and a renewed commitment to moderation." Tentative approval had been given to new party statutes that went some way toward meeting the demands of reformists. Party officials were limited to two terms in office, individuals were prohibited from simultaneously holding top party and government positions (except in the case of the prime minister), and procedures were established for general use of secret ballots and multiple candidate slates. Final approval of these statutes was to be subject to review by a commission whose future was left vague.³⁰

The Western press, however, pointed out that despite the massive turnovers that had taken place, the political make up of the regime did not seem to have changed much. The Politburo vote was described as backing the "centrists," but while nearly three-fourths of the Politburo was new, it still included three prominent hard liners. One was the survivor Stefan Olszowski, and another was Alban Siwak, a bullish first secretary from a lower party echelon. The third was Miroslaw Milewski, who had been the minister of the interior, and who was known by U.S. intelligence analysts to have been a key figure in martial law planning.³¹

Shortly after the congress concluded, in accordance with the new party statutes, Milewski gave up the interior minister post. Jaruzelski replaced him with a senior military officer, General Kiszcak, whose former positions included chief of military intelligence and commander of the internal militia. Another military officer, General Hupalowski (who had been the principal deputy chief of the General Staff and delivered the "exercise" plans from Moscow in December 1980) was appointed as minister for administration, local economy, and environment.³² Neither of these appointments drew any attention at the time, either in the media or intelligence reports, but in hindsight they appear to have been early steps toward putting the military in position to run the show if a state of emergency were declared.

30. "Poland: Conclusion of Congress," decl. *NID*, 21 July 1981; "Poland: Beyond the Congress," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 23 July 1981.

31. "Poland: Beyond the Congress," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 23 July 1981; "Poland's Premier Says Some Prices Will Rise by 110 Percent," *NYT*, 20 July 1981, A1.

32. According to Cynkin, *U.S. and Soviet Signaling*, this information was reported in the international media at the time. His reference is Radio Free Europe Research and Analysis Department, Background Report 32, February 1982.

Chapter 11: Solidarity Charges Ahead, and the Regime Digs In

Solidarity completed its own elections of delegates for its first national congress at the end of June, about the same time the party finished its delegate elections. Solidarity's congress was not scheduled to take place until September, however, and was to be held in two parts. The first was to begin on 5 September, and was intended to be a short, three day assembly to debate draft proposals for the union's organizational and constitutional statutes. The congress would then take a break to redraft the proposals in response to the first session's debates, and reconvene on 26 September for what was envisaged as about a weeklong assembly to enact the statutes, set a program for the future, and elect the union's leadership. In contrast to the party congress, where the leaders' main challenge was to hold ground, Solidarity's challenge was to forge an agreement on how far to go.

A critical factor that would shape this path was the plummeting Polish economy, which was beginning to reach crisis proportions in midsummer. On 23 July, the government announced that monthly per capita meat rations would be cut by 20 percent, and published a list of price increases showing food items such as butter, bread, sugar, and milk had more than tripled in price while others such as flour and ham had more than doubled. By this time, the regime's practice of simply printing money to deal with the wage settlements of the past year had resulted in production costs exceeding retail prices for many consumer items. A week later the parliamentary budget commission reported that per capita national income for 1981 was expected to be 15 percent lower the already dismal 1980 level.¹

1. The price hikes and rationing cuts were reported in "Poland: Protests Over Food Shortages," decl. *NID*, 25 July 1981. They had been previewed in the economic plan presented at the party congress. See "Poland: First Day of the Congress," decl. *NID*, 15 July 1981. Descriptions of the Polish economic problems are contained in Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 189-92, on the immediate issues of the July rationing and price actions, and chapter 13 on the broader programmatic issues. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution, 1981-87*, gives a vivid presentation of the societal and political impact of the government actions, and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 298-301, gives a concise but data-rich account.

These announcements were the match in the tinderbox. Protests and “hunger marches” erupted almost immediately. Local Solidarity chapters, over the objections of the union’s National Coordinating Commission, helped to organize and supervise some of these marches in an effort to channel the anger away from even more inflammatory reactions. The anger among the populace was intensified by stories, in an increasingly open national media, revealing the degree to which the economic suffering was being aggravated by gross incompetence and mismanagement of distribution of the already limited supplies. Adding still more fuel to the outrage was the ill-disguised corruption and skimming by party and government officials, and rumors of secret hoards.

Solidarity called a special meeting of its National Coordinating Commission on 24–26 July to come up with a plan for coping with the deepening economic crisis. Such a plan could not, however, be addressed separately from the union’s overall vision of its institutional role in shaping national economic and social policies. These July discussions would thus have a powerful impact on the shape of the national congress slated for September.

To deal with the immediate problem of shortages and rationing, the union demanded direct access to all government stores and to government data on food and other critical consumer goods. Initially interpreted as a demand for “control,” this was later clarified as a demand to audit the data and monitor the distribution, to remove incompetent officials, and to refer for prosecution any corruption that was discovered. In part, the demands put forth by the union leaders were aimed at easing the social ferment generated by the refusal of a distrustful populace to accept explanations from government officials even when they were truthful.

Another issue shaping the backdrop for Solidarity’s upcoming congress was the concept of “workers’ self-government.” The principle of workers’ participation in enterprise management was a long-standing myth of the communist system, and with government concurrence it had been included as a provision of the Gdansk agreement. Solidarity’s efforts to avoid charges of political aspirations, however, had led the union to avoid actions that would be interpreted as efforts to take over management of the enterprises. Solidarity had instead focused mainly on trying to bring reality to the sham of elected “workers’ councils,” that were supposed to have at least a consultative voice in plant decisions and in the appointment and rating of managers. This had been the stance taken in the April publication of Solidarity’s national program.²

2. It was published on 17 April 1981 in Solidarity’s weekly *Tygodnik Solidarność*. The full text is in Raina, *Poland*, 1981, 172–97.

No more. At the end of July, Solidarity made genuine workers' self-management the front piece of its program for economic renewal. The workers councils at enterprises were to be freely elected, and would have the authority to choose managers and remove the managers. There remained some debates even within Solidarity's leadership over what procedures should be established for performing these functions, and how the authority for appointing and removing managers would be structured. But there was no disagreement within Solidarity that the objective was to assume authority, not simply consultative status, in running enterprises.

During the first two weeks of August, these demands by Solidarity became the issues of debate in meetings between the union leadership and government representatives. An agreement of sorts was reached on the issue of distribution of food and other consumer goods, once it became understood that by "control" Solidarity meant checking information on all aspects of food supply and seeking to constrain black market sales. Solidarity also showed some understanding on the need for price increases, as long as these were managed in coordination with the union.

The talks on self-governing enterprises, however, broke down in a confrontation that resulted in a public exchange of accusations. Ostensibly, the principal sticking point was over how much authority the workers would have over the appointments of enterprise managers and directors. The government's tactics seemed designed to cause a confrontation, however, in a way that suggested the real issue was Solidarity's move to share authority in national policy decisions, which the regime obviously considered its exclusive territory.³

The tenor of relations between Solidarity and the regime at this juncture was exemplified in a Kania speech published in the Polish media on 4 September, the day before the opening of Solidarity's congress. It had been delivered to a Central Committee meeting the previous day and said, "our enemies say the authorities will not proclaim a state of emergency in Poland. I would like to state categorically that the authorities will make use of all essential means to defend the socialist system in Poland." The *National Intelligence Daily* reported that this was the first time Kania personally had explicitly threatened a "state of emergency." The same day that this speech appeared in the Polish press, the Soviets began a large exercise with army units in the western USSR and naval units on the Baltic Sea operating all

3. A detailed, day-to-day account of these meetings, along with the various communiqués and competing public statements that accompanied them, is in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 299–318. Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution, 187–98*, gives a contextual presentation including the social-political dynamics. The events were reported incrementally in the *NID* throughout the month.

around Poland's borders, including off the coast of Gdansk where the first session of Solidarity's congress was scheduled to begin a day later.⁴

Solidarity's First National Congress: The Initial Salvo

A report in the *NID*, previewing the first session of Solidarity's congress, described the fundamental issues to be addressed as including the authority of union leaders, demands for a far reaching system of worker self-management, and how far the union should go toward being a political party.⁵ By all accounts, the union meetings had all the characteristics of a rival party convention. Debates on the touchy issues of its organization and future goals of the union were open and raucous—anyone could speak and most did. The daily sessions featured guest speakers from the journalists association and from West European member unions of the International Labor Organization. (The head of the U.S. AFL/CIO, however, had been denied a visa by the Polish government.) Because the Polish government insisted that it be allowed to “edit” the segments of the congress shown on Polish television, the union refused to allow Polish television to produce live coverage of the congress. West European TV coverage was thus more extensive than what was presented to the Polish citizenry.⁶

Formal adoption of a union program for economic renewal was to be left to the second segment of the congress, but the first segment nonetheless released what was described as a list of Poland's “national needs.” One was “economic reform through creation of self-management bodies and an efficient economic system through abolition of the party nomenklatura.” Another was “safeguarding democracy by holding free elections to the Sejm [parliament] and the peoples councils.” These statements alone almost certainly would have met the criteria for what the Polish regime would later characterize as “a program of political opposition.”⁷

4. “Poland: Kania Continues Tough Line,” decl. *NID*, 5 September 1981. The quoted passage from Kania's speech is in the Embassy cable described below, note 16. For the Soviet exercise, see “Poland: More Strikes in the Offing,” decl. *NID*, 4 September 1981.

5. “Poland: Solidarity's First National Congress,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 5 September 1981.

6. Detailed descriptions of the first segment of Solidarity's national congress are in Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 196-99; Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 208-13; Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 319-23.

7. “Polish Communists Assert the Union Invites a Tragedy,” *NYT*, 17 September 81, A1. The full “needs” list is given by Andrews, *Poland, 1980-81*, 197, and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 321.

The real bombshell from this session, however, was a “message of solidarity” addressed to the workers of the USSR and East Europe. It said that: “As the first independent labor union in Poland’s postwar history, we deeply feel a sense of community [with you]. . . . Our goal is to struggle for an improvement in life for all working people. We support those of you who have decided to enter the difficult road of struggle for a free and independent labor movement. We trust that our and your representatives will be able to meet soon to compare union experiences.”⁸

Reactions to this message and to the declarations of the Solidarity congress in general were as would have been expected. Moscow declared that the union had unmasked itself as a rival political movement seeking to usurp the authority of the socialist government. Most of the other East European capitals also weighed in with expressions of outrage at what they described as Solidarity’s brazen interference in their internal affairs. The Polish Foreign Ministry called the Solidarity message to other East European workers “a blow against Poland’s national interests . . . [and] demonstrative interference in the internal affairs of the other socialist states.” Many Western media commentaries said that the union seemed to have gone too far.⁹

Revived Concerns over Martial Law

In the wake of this turmoil, the U.S. State Department cabled the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw on 15 September, saying that “the increased tension between the [Polish] regime and Solidarity, together with Kania’s September 4 warning that the government might use force ‘to defend Socialism,’ raise the possibility of a government imposition of martial law in the coming weeks or months. Given the importance such an action would have on USG

The quotation is from the Polish regime’s official response on 16 September 1981, described below.

8. The full text is given by Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 212, and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 320–21. It originally appeared in Solidarity’s weekly publication *Tygodnik Solidarność* on 8 September 1981, and an English translation appeared in the FBIS *East European Daily*, 9 September 81, G7. Intelligence reporting on the move was in “Poland: Militant Proposals at Party Congress,” decl. *NID*, 10 September 1981, and “Poland: End of Union Congress,” decl. *NID*, 11 September 1981.

9. Examples of comments published in various East and West European media are given in Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 198.

policies toward Poland, we would appreciate the Embassy's evaluation.”¹⁰

The Embassy team was asked to address such issues as the circumstances that might precipitate martial law, modalities by which martial law might be introduced (e.g., total or partial), and the likely reactions of Solidarity and Rural Solidarity, the church, the general populace, and the army and security organs. The cable also asked for an evaluation of the regime's chances for success in such an effort, including examination of alternative scenarios for success and failure.

The day after the Embassy received this request, but before it had a chance to respond, the Polish party released what one U.S. press report called “its hardest statement yet” in a pattern of increasing references to the willingness to use force. The statement called Solidarity’s letter to the East European unions a “crazy provocation,” and characterized the union’s demand for changing parliamentary election procedures as “arrogant.” It accused Solidarity of producing a “program of political opposition” that hit at the vital interests of the Polish nation and that could lead to a national confrontation that “resulted in bloodshed.” It asserted that there was “no room and could be no room for such a program in Poland,” and that “the State will use for its defense such means as required by the situation.”¹¹

The increasing tensions prompted a warning in the 18 September *NID* that

the Intelligence Community has sensed a qualitative change in the attitudes of Solidarity and the Polish Communist Party. The former has directly challenged the authority of the Polish party and, indirectly, Soviet hegemony. The latter has indicated a determination to confront Solidarity’s challenges if necessary with the use of force.

The Polish regime has drawn up a detailed plan of military measures, including curfews, shows of force, total military control of the country, and arrest of Solidarity leaders. The Polish leadership appears

10. “Martial Law and the Kania Government,” decl. State cable 245350, 150117Z September 81, *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*. It was sent from Washington on 14 September but received by the Embassy on 15 September Warsaw time. The date it ascribed to Kania’s speech was the day that the speech was reported in the Polish media, which was a day after the speech was given.

11. “Poland: Confronting Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 17 September 1981, and “Poland: Union Under Pressure,” decl. *NID*, 18 September 1981. The “hardest yet” quote is from “Polish Communists Assert the Union Invites a Tragedy,” *NYT*, 17 September 1981, A1. For additional media views see also “Warsaw Declares Union Jeopardizes Nation’s Existence,” *NYT*, 19 September 1981, 1.

to be readying itself for the possible employment of at least some of these measures in the near future. . . .

The chances of a confrontation leading to the regime's use of force have risen considerably unless the more moderate elements of Solidarity manage to tone down those union actions most objectionable to the government.¹²

This judgment was itself a "qualitative change" from the assessments conveyed in various intelligence products in the preceding months, which had allowed little room for outcomes other than Soviet invasion or unchecked liberalism in Poland. It was presented in a special analysis that apparently was the product of an interagency group of analysts, which may account for its sharp distinction from the more complacent view that would continue to be reflected in the *NID* in the ensuing weeks.¹³

The same day that this intelligence assessment was disseminated, the official Polish media carried text from yet another letter from the Soviet regime, this time lambasting the Polish leaders for their failure to quell the "anti-Sovietism" being fostered by Solidarity. "[A]ny further leniency to any manifestation of anti-Sovietism does immense harm to Polish-Soviet relations . . . we expect that the Polish United Workers Party leadership will take determined and radical steps to cut short the . . . actions hostile to the Soviet Union."

According to a Western press account, "few times since the end of World War II" had such language been seen in communications between the Soviets and one of their Warsaw Pact allies. The letter reportedly had been delivered before—and therefore probably had been the force behind—the statement released by the Polish Politburo on 16 September.¹⁴

12. "Poland: Prospect for Confrontation," Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 18 September 1981.

13. The explicit identification of the views as being those of "the Intelligence Community" is unusual for a *NID* article, and is usually reserved for interagency products produced under the aegis of the National Intelligence Council, the body responsible for "Community" products such as *National Intelligence Estimates*. The term "Intelligence Community" is not used to identify the source of judgments in *any* of the other declassified *NID* reports on Poland in the months preceding or following this article.

14. "Moscow Orders Poles to Control Anti-Sovietism," *NYT*, 18 September 1981, A1; "Warsaw Declares Union Jeopardizes Nation's Existence," *NYT*, 19 September 1; "Warning From Moscow," *NYT*, 19 September 1981, 1; and "Text of Letter," *NYT*, 19 September 1981, 4. Information now available from Soviet and Polish archives indicates the letter was drafted under instructions by the Soviet Politburo on 10 September (see Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 17) and delivered by 14 September (see "CPSU CC

The State Department again accused the Soviets of intervening in Poland's internal affairs. Press reports said U.S. officials believed the Soviet letter was an effort to make Polish authorities impose force. U.S. officials did not rule out a Soviet invasion, according to the press accounts, but most believed that Moscow much preferred that the Poles institute their own crackdown.¹⁵

The next day the U.S. Embassy dispatched its response to the State Department's request for an assessment of the situation. It concluded that the Polish regime might employ some form of martial law, "if it considers its own existence at stake, or if the situation has deteriorated to the point where Soviet intervention is inevitable." The Embassy said that Solidarity's recent actions had already gone a substantial way toward meeting the first criteria. As a consequence, the existing situation contained "the two generally agreed conditions that could trigger a Soviet intervention—a threat to the leading role of the party, or the integrity of Poland's system of alliances, the Warsaw Pact."

The Embassy nonetheless rated the prospects that the regime would *attempt* to impose martial law "in the existing situation" as "less than fifty-fifty." It was clear from the descriptions in the cable, however, that by "less than fifty-fifty" the Embassy still meant better than one chance in three.¹⁶

The Embassy saw *far less chance* that an attempt to impose martial law might *succeed*. This was because:

- The regime could not be certain of the loyalty of the military and internal security forces. "In fact, it knows their reliability is suspect."
- Declaring martial law in the existing circumstances would at a minimum lead to passive resistance in the form of general strikes and sit-ins, which would be difficult for the army to counter "even if all units remained loyal." The result could be national paralysis. There was also a good chance, in the Embassy's view, that the resistance would erupt into civil conflict and a total breakdown of law and order.
- "Either result could lead to the very [Soviet] intervention that introduction of martial law would seek to avoid."

Communication to the PZPR . . . , " circulated to Polish party officials on 14 September 1981, *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*).

15. "U.S. Says Soviet Message is Intervention in Poland's Internal Affairs," *NYT*, 19 September 1981, 4.

16. "Martial Law—An Unpromising Option," decl. State Department Cable, Warsaw 9079, 191626Z, *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*.

The Embassy also believed that imposition of martial law would move Poland “toward an economic catastrophe.” Taken together these considerations constituted a substantial deterrent to an attempt at martial law, according to the Embassy assessment.

The Embassy concluded that if martial law were to have a chance of success, it would have to be preceded by “a successful regime effort to portray Solidarity as recalcitrant and unyielding after the government had presented itself as forthcoming and willing to compromise.” The threat of Soviet intervention also would have to be “less ambiguous than it is now.” The regime would need to “preserve the loyalty of the army, split Solidarity and the other opposition groups, and gain at least the tacit approval of the church. This would be a most difficult prescription.” The Embassy therefore concluded: “Martial law may be an option. It could be used with confidence in few cases that the Embassy can see.”¹⁷

At about the same time that this Embassy assessment was dispatched to Washington, Polish government officials were releasing information that an “emergency meeting” of the Council of Ministers on 17 September had “examined concrete measures” that “may turn out to be essential in defending the state.” This was followed a few days later by word that another emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers was held on Sunday, 20 September, at which government leaders “discussed urgent matters . . . assessed the state of readiness of the organs of state administration . . . [and made] several necessary decisions.” Intelligence analysts as well as Western journalists described these as “ambiguous” or “vaguely” worded expressions seeming to refer to martial law.

On 21 September, in an apparent manifestation of regime reaction to Moscow’s tirade, two Solidarity activists were arrested on the charge of anti-Soviet activities.¹⁸ A few days later the Polish press reported that

17. The Embassy assessment also addressed several specific issues of conflict that conceivably could spark martial law. These included Solidarity’s outreach for free trade unions in other Pact countries, pressures for free elections to the parliament, spontaneous law and order breakdown, threats to Soviet logistic connections, media access conflicts, protests over food prices and distribution, and the pressures for enterprise self-management. The prospects for one of these to prompt martial law were rated from one in three to less than one in ten. The validity of treating any one of these as separate from the existing situation, rather than as an exacerbation of the existing conditions, can be legitimately questioned.

18. “USSR-Poland: Moscow’s Warning,” decl. *NID*, 19 September 1981; “Poland-USSR: Cautious Reaction by Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 21 September 1981; “USSR-Poland: Possible Economic Pressures,” decl. *NID*, 23 September 1981; “USSR-Poland: Soviet Pressures,” decl. *NID*, 25 September 1981. Also “Polish Regime Says An Urgent Action is Being Prepared,” *NYT*, 21 September 1981, A1.

Jaruzelski had notified parliament that he had instructed the Polish police to put an end to lawlessness and anti-Soviet behavior, and that army units would be deployed to assist the police and internal security forces.¹⁹

New Warnings from Kuklinski

By this time, the CIA had learned from Kuklinski that the Chief of the Polish General Staff, General Florian Siwicki, had told a small group of Polish military officers that Poland was approaching the imposition of martial law. According to Kuklinski, this occurred during a meeting of military officers on 9 September, the day after Solidarity's weekly bulletin published the union's message to workers in the USSR and other East European countries. General Siwicki reportedly had assured the officers, in response to their questions, that help would be received from the Soviets if the Polish attempt to impose martial law by themselves proved unsuccessful. He also told the officers that the proclamations to be issued with the declaration of martial law were being printed in the USSR, presumably to prevent someone involved in the printing process from warning Solidarity.²⁰

Another report from Kuklinski described a pivotal meeting that had been held on Sunday, 13 September, by the National Defense Committee, the select body of senior military and political officials responsible for strategic military policy decisions. As noted above, this committee was the oversight authority for martial law planning, and Jaruzelski—with his dual roles as prime minister and defense minister—served as both chairman and deputy chairman. Kuklinski had not attended the National Defense Committee meeting, but was briefed on it afterwards when he was assigned to tasks that had been directed as a result of the meeting, and he dispatched his report two days after the meeting, on 15 September. He was told that “almost all of the participants [at the meeting] supported it [martial law].” He said that this was the first meeting of this committee attended by Kania, who reportedly was somewhat surprised that there was near unanimity for implementing martial law. Kania did not challenge the inevitability of such action, according to what Kuklinski had been told, but said he wanted first to con-

19. “USSR-Poland: Soviet Pressures,” decl. *NID*, 25 September 1981; and “Premier In Poland Calls On Police To Put an End To Anti-Soviet Activity,” *NYT*, 25 September, A1.

20. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 234.

tinue to pursue political avenues and “if that should fail, repression may be adopted.”²¹

Kuklinski said that during the two days following this meeting he had been assigned to a small group that included representatives of the army, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Party Central Committee tasked with drawing up a “unified plan of command for the surprise introduction of martial law.” He said the plan was still being put together as he was sending his message, and he could therefore only give a brief summary.

In brief, martial law will be introduced at night, either between Friday and a work-free Saturday or between Saturday and Sunday, when industrial plants will be closed. Arrests will begin about midnight, six hours before an announcement of martial law will be broadcast over the radio and television. Roughly six hundred people will be arrested in Warsaw, which will require the use of around one thousand police in unmarked cars. That same night, the army will seal off the most important areas of Warsaw and other major cities. Initially, only the MSW’s [Ministry of Internal Affairs] forces will take part. A separate decision will be made about “improving the deployment of armies,” that is, redeploying entire divisions to major cities. This will be done only if reports come in about larger pockets of unrest.

The Embassy assessment that was sent to Washington on 19 September almost certainly would not have had the benefit of this recent reporting from Kuklinski. The senior CIA officer in the Embassy and no more than a very few other CIA officers probably would have been aware of Kuklinski’s recent reports. For security reasons—which had become all the more imperative with Kuklinski’s latest message—they clearly would not have introduced it into the Embassy team’s deliberations. The U.S. ambassador was aware of the mission Kuklinski was performing, but has said he did not see any of the original reporting, only “summaries from time to time.”²² All of the information specifically cited in the Embassy’s assessment was available

21. This cable from Kuklinski is one of three of his original reporting messages that were released for his use in the early 1990s to prepare for a judicial review of his case in Poland. One of the other released documents is his message sent on 4 December 1980, described earlier. The full texts of all three messages are in Kramer, “Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis, 1980–81,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 48ff.

22. See Ambassador Francis Meehan’s article “Reflections on the Polish Crisis,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 46.

from public media. Nonetheless, the political dynamics by themselves led the Embassy team to rate the chances of martial law somewhere between one in three and one in two.

Whether Kuklinski's reporting was a factor in the heightened concern for martial law expressed by the special analysis in the 18 September *NID* has not been disclosed. That assessment would have been drafted no later than 17 September, and perhaps earlier. Kuklinski's report of the National Defense Committee meeting probably did not arrive in Washington until the 16th, so it would have been a close call but possible. The assessment's unequivocal statement that the Polish regime "has" drawn up a detailed martial law plan certainly seems to have been informed by Kuklinski's reporting, but he had made this clear in his reporting months earlier. If the conclusions were *not informed* by knowledge of the latest Kuklinski report, then one has to ask how strongly the judgments might have been expressed if the authors *had* been aware of it at the time the assessment was written.

At this same time, the CIA learned that reporting from this special source was quite likely coming to an end. In his message of 15 September, Kuklinski said he had been told that during the National Defense Committee meeting two days earlier, the minister of internal affairs had reported that Solidarity knew the details of the martial law plans, including the code-name for the operation. Kuklinski pointed out to his CIA contacts that only a relatively small circle of people engaged in preparing the plans were privy to this code-name, and that "it will be easy to compile a group of suspects." He said a counterintelligence officer had already visited him the day after the meeting. He concluded his message with an admonition:

Because the investigation is proceeding, I will have to forgo my daily reports about current developments. Please treat with caution the information I am conveying to you, since it appears that my mission is coming to an end. The nature of the information makes it quite easy to detect the source. I do not object to, and indeed welcome, having the information I have conveyed serve those who fight for the freedom of Poland with their heads raised high. I am prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, but the best way to achieve something is with our actions and not with our sacrifices.

Long live Poland!

Long live Solidarity, which brings freedom to all oppressed nations!

For obvious operational reasons, this part of Kuklinski's message would have been confined to the intelligence operations officers who wouldulti-

mately be charged with his safety. The substantive information relating to martial law would have been disseminated separately to the already small “compartment” of analysts and policy officials who had access to the intelligence from this source. The fact that the source was in a major life-threatening situation also meant that this compartment would become even more closely guarded.

Nonetheless, intelligence analysts responsible for assessing the evolving situation in Poland continued to have access to Kukinski’s information on martial law preparations right up to and after his escape from Poland. There were constraints on how explicitly Kuklinski’s information could be cited in disseminated products, but the analysts certainly were able to draw on it to help interpret the overall body of evidence from all sources, and form their assessments of the level of danger.²³ The tenor of the *NID*’s description of the unfolding evidence in the two and a half months leading up to martial law, however, raises significant questions as to how this unique information was treated in the analysis of the larger overall picture.

Signals Missed?

On 24 September, the *NID* reported newly acquired information that a martial law plan had been discussed by the Polish Politburo at a meeting held more than a week earlier, on 15 September. This report said the plan had been submitted by the Polish military authorities, but reportedly had been rejected by a majority of the Politburo. The intelligence assessment commented that “the *apparent* backing by the military for emergency measures *suggests* a *possible* hardening of attitudes among *some* senior officers” (emphasis added).²⁴

This assessment did not address whether or how a plan of such magnitude could have been submitted to the Politburo by military authorities without having been approved by the top military officer—the minister of defense—and why this did not “suggest” that he was among the “some” military authorities whose attitudes were “possibly” hardening. And this top military officer was also prime minister and head of the government, a

23. This is based on the author’s access to the intelligence production at the time and subsequent confirmation from discussion with CIA officers who were then involved on both the collection and analysis sides of the issue.

24. “Poland: Differences Over Martial Law” decl. *NID*, 24 September 1981. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 234, refers to a meeting “in mid-September” at which the Polish leaders turned down a plan to implement martial law.

member of the Politburo, chairman of the National Defense Committee overseeing martial law planning, and clearly the single most powerful official in the Polish regime. Nor did the intelligence report explain why the submission of the martial law plan indicated only “apparent” backing, or why such backing and the “possible hardening of attitudes” would have been confined to military officials.

The failure to address these issues and the generally low-key treatment of the potential significance of this Politburo debate on martial law are striking by themselves. They are even more baffling in view of the fact that by the time this *NID* was disseminated, the CIA had been informed that this Politburo meeting had been preceded two days earlier by a National Defense Committee meeting on martial law, chaired by Jaruzelski, at which most participants had favored going ahead with martial law. The CIA also had been told that the main resistance to martial law at that session had come from Kania, and that even he did not rule it out, arguing only that political measures should be continued until it could be clearly demonstrated that they would not resolve the situation. It is hard to see how analysts could avoid examining the Politburo discussion that took place on 15 September as a follow-up to the meeting of the National Defense Committee. The CIA had been informed that at the very time the Politburo debate was taking place, a special working group that had been established by the National Defense Committee meeting—and that included more than just military personnel—was refining the details of the plans for implementing martial law.

The *NID* report on the 15 September Politburo meeting also failed to mention that a day after it was held, the party released a statement that the U.S. press described as its “hardest yet.” Nor did the *NID* account address the possibility that the two meetings of the Council of Ministers that followed this Politburo meeting—both of which were chaired by Jaruzelski and both of which were followed by statements that the press and intelligence analysts alike described at the time as seeming to refer to martial law—might have been linked to the Politburo debate. This apparent absence of analytic linkage of these events and of their cumulative implications continued to be evident in the intelligence reporting in the following weeks.

Escalating Threats to Regime Preeminence

On 25 September, the week after the regime had held its spate of meetings on martial law and one day before the opening of the second session of

Solidarity's congress, the Polish regime suffered a significant defeat in a head-to-head contest with the union. On that day the Polish parliament—the Sejm—passed new laws for “workers self-management” and “state enterprises.” On the most contested point, the authority to appoint and dismiss directors and managers of enterprises, the parliament approved language very close to a compromise that had been agreed to by government and Solidarity negotiators a few days earlier.

The Polish party, however, had rejected the compromise agreed to by the government negotiators, and had informed the parliament of this two days before the vote. The parliamentary commission in charge of drafting the laws nonetheless continued to support the compromise language, and—over the government's objections—submitted it to a vote of the full parliament. And it passed. The party thus found itself in the position of having issued what it considered to be instructions to the parliament, only to see the parliament disregard those instructions and add insult to injury by supporting the compromise that the union had accepted and the party had rejected.

The parliament's action granted worker-elected councils the right to appoint and dismiss directors at plants and factories, except for those facilities that the new laws defined as “state enterprises.” The identification of “state enterprises” was to be done by the council of ministers on the basis of the facilities' role in defense and security, law enforcement, or national functions such as communications, finance, and transportation. Even at these enterprises, the parliamentary law granted worker councils the right to appeal managerial selections, while the government would have reciprocal appeal rights at enterprises where appointments and dismissals were under the initiative of the worker councils.²⁵

Most outside observers and the Polish regime itself saw this as a strategic victory for Solidarity and a major set back to the party's authority. Many Solidarity delegates at the union congress, however, regarded the new laws as still conceding too much to the government. They were also particularly incensed at the way the compromise was reached, accusing Walesa of again assuming too much authority. Apparently only four members of the union's

25. “New Polish Laws Give Workers Role In Running Plants,” *NYT*, 26 September 1981, 1. For further background see Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 213–14; and Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 390–95. The texts of the laws approved by the Sejm were published in *Tribjuna Luda* on 28 and 29 September 1981. An English translation of the texts is in Raina, *Poland*, 396–419. On the issue of the authority of workers' councils toward managers, see article 24:2 of the Law on Self-Management, and article 4:1 through article 6 of the Law on State Enterprises.

“presidium” were present when he presented the compromise language for approval, and even then he had had a tough sell.

These issues became subject to acrimonious debate when the second round of the union congress opened the next day. The delegates ultimately voted to accept the parliamentary action for the time being, but extracted agreement that amendments to certain portions of the new laws would be submitted to union-wide referendums. Walesa and the other members of the union presidium that had authorized the compromise received a vote of censure by the congress for exceeding their authority. The Solidarity delegates also sent Walesa a message in their vote for union chairman. While he beat the closest of his three opponents by better than two to one, he still received only a little over 55 percent of the vote—an indication of the growing divide between what were by then being described as “moderates around Walesa” and “militants” supporting more confrontational tactics.²⁶

These contentions within Solidarity and the indications of growing factionalism in the union were the main focus of *NID* reports on the events surrounding the enactment of the workers self-employment laws. The Western media also gave extensive coverage to the union debates, but at the same time—even though it did not have the benefit of Kuklinski’s information—began painting a more threatening picture of the longer term outlook.

Press reports described the parliamentary action on workers’ self-management laws as a “considerable erosion in the power of the Communist Party,” and said the pattern of events was “moving Poland away from the orthodox Soviet model.” An article filed from Moscow on the day Solidarity opened the second session of its congress said the consensus of Western diplomats there was that the Soviets could not accept the transformation of Poland into the liberalized social-democratic system that seemed to be evolving. The diplomatic view there was that “prospects for the Poles were as dark as they have been at any time since Solidarity’s rise a year ago.” A *New York Times* opinion article at about this same time posed in its title the fundamental question “For How Long Can Poland Practice Its Brinksmanship?” It characterized the earlier Politburo discussions as indicating the Polish regime was “seriously considering declaring a state of

26. “Poland: Solidarity Militants Attack Compromise,” decl. *NID*, 28 September 1981; “Poland: Central Committee Meeting Called,” decl. *NID*, 30 September 1981; “Poland: Walesa’s Victory,” decl. *NID*, 3 October 1981. Also “Union Militants in Poland Attack Leaders Over Government Accord,” *NYT*, 28 September, A1; “Polish Convention Chastises Walesa,” *NYT*, 30 September, A9; and “Walesa Wins Union Vote With Ease,” *NYT*, 3 October 1981, 3.

emergency . . . a drastic step tantamount to declaring martial law,” and quoted a “party official speaking privately” as having said such a step would be accompanied by arrests.²⁷

Whatever the differences in view regarding prospects for martial law, there could be no doubt that on the eve of the opening of the second round of Solidarity’s congress, the challenges to the Polish regime had already escalated sharply, and the option of a forceful suppression was being debated. The U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, while rating the chances for martial law “under existing conditions” as less than fifty-fifty, had nonetheless judged Solidarity’s actions in the first round of its Congress having “gone a substantial way” toward creating the kind of threat to the regime that could cause it to resort to such measures. An Intelligence Community special analysis disseminated at about the same time as the Embassy assessment had said that the Polish regime was determined “to prevent a further erosion of its authority, and to employ force if the union refuses to back off,” and that the chances for use of force had risen considerably unless Solidarity managed “to tone down those union actions most objectionable to the government.”²⁸ Solidarity’s actions in the next few weeks showed no signs of backing off or toning down.

A Rival Constitution

In the first week of October, while the union congress was still in session, the government announced another round of price increases on food and other consumer products. At that time, union leaders had already indicated that they understood some price increases would be unavoidable. They had their own concerns that the disastrous state of the economy was eroding control of their local and provincial organizations, and that failure to stem

27. “New Polish Laws Give Workers Role in Running Plants,” *NYT*, 26 September 1981, 1; “Soviet Fears For Empire In Crisis,” *NYT*, 27 September 1981, 4E; “For How Long Can Poland Practice Its Brinksmanship?” *NYT*, 27 September 1981, 4E. The date of this “Brinksmanship” article and the fact that it described the Politburo meeting as having taken place “last week” could lead to a conclusion that it was referring to another, subsequent Politburo meeting on martial law, and this cannot be ruled out. Nonetheless, the article was drafted by the *NYT* reporter covering events from Warsaw, John Darnton, a few days before its publication in the editorial section of the Sunday *NYT*, which would appear to put the Politburo meeting it referred to in the week of 13–19 September.

28. “Martial Law—An Unpromising Option,” decl. State Department Cable, Warsaw 9079, 191626Z, *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*; and “Poland: Prospect for Confrontation,” Special Analysis, decl. *NID*, 18 September 1981.

the economic deterioration would lead to disintegration of grass roots support for the union's larger program of social renewal. Solidarity's leaders were in the process of seeking agreement of their congress to a framework for union and government consultation on pricing and rationing, when the government made its announcement.

The union leaders considered the government action deliberately preemptive and dictatorial, and they protested vehemently. Walesa dispatched a letter to Jaruzelski, who sent a representative to meet with Solidarity leaders. The union demanded that the government rescind the increases until after the congress, and then engage in consultations. The government refused, and Solidarity responded at the end of its congress by threatening a national one-hour "warning" strike within two weeks if there was no progress on the issue.²⁹

The *NID* described Solidarity's threatened action as a "token" strike and one of the "moderate" outcomes of the union's congress. Intelligence analysts nonetheless said that the government decision to go through with the price hikes would intensify militant pressures within the union, and this certainly proved to be correct.³⁰

Solidarity concluded its congress on 7 October with the formal ratification of the "program" that it had been constructing since early in the year. A sampling of its provisions for transforming economic and political life included:

- Public control over government decisions for dealing with the economic crisis, elimination of the practice of appointing party apparatchiks to industrial management positions, and creation of a "new socioeconomic system based on self-government, and the market."
- "Pluralism of views" as the "foundation of democracy in the self-governing republic."
- New electoral laws insuring free elections for local and provincial self-governing councils and the national parliament, and an examination of the possibility of creating a second parliamentary chamber.
- Creation of a tribunal for identifying and punishing individuals responsible for past actions of violence against workers and citizens, going

29. "Poland: Moderates Gain Time," decl. *NID*, 5 October 1981; "Poland: Government Stands Firm" decl. *NID*, 6 October 1981; "Poland: Solidarity Congress Ends," decl. *NID*, 8 October 1981. Also "Poland Announces Price Rises and Union Protests," *NYT*, 5 October 1981, A4; "Poland Enforces Price Increases," *NYT*, 6 October 1981, A4; "Polish Union Adopts Economic Plan," *NYT*, 8 October 1981, A3.

30. "Poland: Solidarity Congress Ends," decl. *NID*, 8 October 1981.

as far back as the 1956 suppression in Poznan and including the 1970 and 1976 violence against strikers and the recent Bydgoszcz incident. If the government did not institute this process by the end of 1981, Solidarity's National Commission would "appoint a social tribunal [which would hold] a national trial [and] pass a verdict on and brand the guilty."

- Protection of the rights of citizens groups, including Solidarity, to own and control the content of their own publishing agencies, and establishment of true "public control over radio and television."³¹

The *NID* characterized Solidarity's program as a "mixture of moderation and militancy." The specific "moderate" aspect cited in the *NID* was preliminary information that a section on foreign affairs that had appeared in earlier drafts of Solidarity's program had been toned down.³² In fact, the program as finally published had no section on foreign affairs. Foreign affairs aside, however, it is hard to see how any reading of the union's program could interpret it as compatible with the Soviet communist model, or consider its advocacy as anything other than an effort to break with that model. With the exception of the "appeal" to workers in other Soviet bloc countries, all of the actions in the first round of the congress that an earlier intelligence assessment had listed as "most objectionable to the government" had been significantly expanded and codified in a formal, printed program that was a direct challenge to the regime.

The *New York Times*, by contrast, described Solidarity's program as "like a new constitution." And said the demand for a tribunal, especially, presented a new level of challenge for the regime. The article postulated that the extent of Solidarity's moves to date suggested the union "might push for changes in other fields to establish a democratic system of government not based on the communist model."³³

Within a few days, strikes began to erupt around Poland protesting food shortages and the government's recently announced price increases. Solidarity's leadership urged local union organizations not to yield to the temptation to engage in wildcat strikes, pending the outcome of talks with

31. The full text of Solidarity's program was distributed in a special edition (no. 29) of Solidarity's weekly *Tygodnik Solidarność* on 16 October 1981. An English version is in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 326–65. The samples presented here are from program theses 1, 2, 21, 22, 26, and 29.

32. "Poland: Solidarity Congress Ends," decl. *NID*, 8 October 1981.

33. "Polish Union Adopts Economic Plan," *NYT*, 8 October 1981, A3.

the government, but the volatility of the situation offered little chance that such urging would have much effect. By mid-October, wildcat strikes and strike alerts had spread to at least eight provinces. Pressures were mounting on Walesa to call a nationally coordinated strike if only to bring back some level of central cohesion to the increasingly rebellious local unions. Solidarity militants were insisting that a counterattack was necessary to retain credibility with the union rank and file and to contain widespread uncoordinated strike activity. The union leaders scheduled a meeting for 22 October to address implementation of the national strike they had threatened at the end of their congress.³⁴

The regime, meanwhile, was about to convene a special meeting of the Party Central Committee, which would prove to be a critical juncture in the cascade of events that had begun at the Gdansk Shipyard over a year earlier.

34. “Poland: Central Committee Meeting Postponed,” decl. *NID*, 14 October 1981; “Poland: Criticism of Leadership,” decl. *NID*, 15 October 1981; “Poland: Pressure on Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 17 October 1981; “Poland: Pressure on Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 17 October 1981. Also “Wildcat Strikes Erupt in Poland,” *NYT*, 14 October 1981, A6; “Poland Says Union Seeks Dictatorship,” *NYT*, 17 October 1981, 3.

Chapter 12: Bringing Down the Curtain

Calls for a party Central Committee “plenum” had begun to be aired in the last week of September, after the parliament’s rebuff on workers self-management laws and the opening of the second session of Solidarity’s congress. After some juggling of the schedule and at least one postponement, the meeting was set for 16 October. The run-up was accompanied by public stories that party hard-liners were stepping up pressures to oust Kania and to impose military force to restore the party’s authority.¹ The reporting that Kuklinski was still able to provide on the deliberations of the Polish military hierarchy indicated that these were more than just rumors.

By mid-October, the CIA learned that Polish military leaders and internal security officers had become convinced that the political line being pursued by Kania was not working, and that the dramatic crackdown laid out in the martial law plans had to be carried out. They were aiming to use the planned Central Committee plenum as a platform for attacking Kania’s position and pushing for the implementation of their plan, which already had the support of party hard-liners. According to the reporting received by the CIA, they also had already succeeded, with a major input from the Soviets, in persuading Jaruzelski to favor imposition of martial law. He reportedly had a number of phone conversations with Brezhnev, from which Kania had been left out.

The refinement of the martial law implementation plans that Kuklinski had initially reported on 15 September had proceeded with heavy Soviet involvement. As described to the CIA, the updated plans continued to count on the availability of backup intervention forces from the USSR and other Warsaw Pact allies as a last resort if assistance proved to be needed. By the end of the first week of October, the updating and refining of the plans was

1. “Poland: Central Committee Meeting Called,” decl. *NID*, 30 September 1981; “Poland: Central Committee Meeting Postponed,” decl. *NID*, 14 October 1981; “Poland: Criticism of Leadership,” decl. *NID*, 15 October 1981; “Polish Union Seeks Freeze in Rise of Prices,” *NYT*, 16 October 1981, A1.

essentially complete and the printing of the proclamations in the USSR had begun.²

This information was reported to senior U.S. policy officials prior to the opening of the Party Central Committee plenum, although because of Kuklinski's precarious situation it was communicated in a special, tightly controlled channel restricted to a relatively small number of top-level individuals. At about the same time, however, a statement on martial law that jibed closely with earlier reporting from Kuklinski appeared in an open source in Poland.

According to Solidarity's news bulletin for the period 26 September to 12 October, Politburo member Alban Siwak had told representatives from the party-fronted trade unions that special units of army and police had been established to put down popular resistance. He reportedly said these forces would be employed in about two months, by which time it was expected that popular support for Solidarity would have weakened. Siwak's revelations included a description of a six-person "Committee of National Salvation" that had been formed, headed by Jaruzelski and Interior Minister Kiszczałk. The Solidarity bulletin said Siwak made these statements at a meeting on 30 September, some two weeks after the CIA had received Kuklinski's report that working groups had been set up to refine the martial law implementation plans, and the various high level meetings had been held on "emergency measures."³

Whether this public statement was simply a result of hubris and indiscretion—characteristics for which Siwak was fairly well known—or some kind of scheme will probably never be known. The timing of the statement suggests it was more a reflection of what Siwak and his fellow hard-liners were seeking to have decided upon rather than something that was already set. Either way, it certainly supported the other evidence on the agenda shaping up for the upcoming party meeting. Solidarity's publications were a source of information on unfolding events in Poland, but there is no reference to Siwak's comments in any of the declassified reports from the *National Intelligence Daily* or any of the other declassified intelligence assessments.

2. Gates describes much of this reporting in *From the Shadows*, 234–35, and the author has discussed the reporting with others who were involved with preparing the reporting at the time.

3. Both Andrews, *Poland, 1980–81*, 204, and Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 234, who were in Poland at the time, quote *Agencja Solidarność*, Bulletin 44 (26 September–12 October 1981): 205.

On 16 October, as the Party Central Committee plenum opened, the Polish government announced that the active duty service of army conscripts due to be discharged at the end of October (about 40,000 troops) had been extended for two months. The induction of new conscripts was to proceed as originally scheduled. The government justified this move on the grounds of a need for the military to increase its contribution to the national economy. The *NID* said the extension of conscript service probably was a step by the regime to “show its resolve to act,” and that it also indicated the regime’s desire to be prepared in the event martial law became necessary.⁴

Some CIA analysts had in fact considered an extension of conscript service as one of the strongest potential warning signals to be watched for. These analysts believed such a step would be a virtual necessity if martial law were imposed within a month or two of the normal conscript rotation date. Attempting a military crackdown with army units that included 40,000 troops only recently drawn from the civilian society was viewed by these analysts as a risk the Polish military would not consider worth taking if it could be avoided. The simple way of avoiding it was to extend the service of the active troops. Going ahead with the call-up of new conscripts at the same time offered a means of removing potential resisters from the civilian ranks, while keeping them out of the martial law enforcement actions by confining them to barracks during its implementation. And this action was taken after the CIA already had received substantial reporting on growing momentum for implementing martial law.

Another Shake-up at the Top

At the opening session of the plenum, Kania came out with his toughest line yet. He accused Solidarity of seeking “dictatorship,” and called for a ban on strikes for the remainder of the fall and through the winter. His tough opening, however, did not spare him from heavy criticism unleashed on the second day of the meeting. The Central Committee also tabled a resolution that day calling on the government to declare a state of emergency. The Western press quoted one Central Committee participant as having said privately that a state of emergency—painful as it might be—

4. “Poland: Party Policy Toughening,” decl. *NID*, 17 October 1981; “Poland Says Union Seeks Dictatorship,” *NYT*, 17 October 1981, 3.

would at least “generate the basic means of living and the rule of law and order.”⁵

On the third day of its Central Committee plenum, 18 October, the party announced that Kania had resigned and had been replaced by Jaruzelski. That same day the Central Committee passed a resolution demanding that parliament impose a temporary suspension of the right to strike, and calling on the government to invoke if necessary “its constitutional prerogatives to guarantee peace in the country”—a formulation the press again interpreted as referring to martial law. This party resolution also demanded that all existing agreements between the government and Solidarity be renegotiated, and said the party intended to tighten control over the media, rejecting the union’s demands for greater access.⁶

The U.S. State Department reacted immediately with a public statement that the United States viewed the resolution as a move to acquire formal authorization for the use of force against Solidarity, and declared, “we see no reason for martial law in Poland.” In response to a question during the press briefing, the State Department representative said that it was “too soon to tell” if Jaruzelski’s accession as party first secretary and the other events at the Central Committee meeting meant hard-liners were in control.⁷

The *NID* described the leadership change as foreshadowing “a tougher policy by the Polish party toward Solidarity that, while continuing the union-government dialogue, also increases the chances of confrontation.” The intelligence assessment said the party’s “acceptance” of Kania’s “resignation . . . reflected heightened frustration within the party over its inability to contain Solidarity. Some moderates may have felt that Kania had to be sacrificed because he had become a symbol of inaction and thus an impediment to his own pragmatic policies.” The *NID* said the selection of Jaruzelski “seems intended to exploit popular respect for the military . . . and possibly to place the party in a position to manage any ‘state of emergency’ more easily.”

5. “Poland: Pressure on Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 17 October 1981; “Poland Says Union Seeks Dictatorship,” *NYT*, 17 October, 3; “Polish Party Meeting is Critical of Leadership,” *NYT*, 18 October 1981, 10.

6. Intelligence interpretations of the leadership change and other actions taken at the 18 October Central Committee meeting are in “Poland: Party Policy Toughening,” decl. *NID*, 19 October 1981; and “Poland: Political Maneuvering,” decl. *NID*, 19 October 1981. Public press accounts are in “Kania is Replaced: Polish Party Gives His Post to Premier,” *NYT*, 19 October 1981, A1; and “Soldier In Power,” *NYT*, 19 October 1981, A1.

7. “Polish Statement Disturbs the U.S.,” *NYT*, 19 October 1981, A14.

According to this intelligence assessment, the resolution passed at the end of the Central Committee meeting “obligated” Jaruzelski to measures “that could bring the government directly into conflict with the Union.” The *NID* also said, however, that the Central Committee had “left the door open to negotiations,” and that Jaruzelski’s recognition of the importance of creating the right atmosphere for any declaration of martial law was likely to cause him “to move cautiously in using more forceful measures.”⁸

The reporting in the *NID* did not address the possibility that the “inaction” that led to the “acceptance” of Kania’s “resignation” was his continuing resistance to martial law, and that the problem was not that he was impeding his own pragmatic policies but that those policies were becoming strongly opposed within the regime. The failure to raise this potential is striking in view of the steady stream of evidence leading up to the Central Committee meeting that pointed specifically to an effort to remove him for exactly that reason.

A month earlier, evidence had been received from Kuklinski that support for martial law was growing, that plans were being debated at the highest political level, and that Kania was increasingly isolated in resisting a decision to carry out the action. In the ensuing weeks the challenge to party supremacy escalated with the parliament’s rebuff to the party on the workers self-management law and Solidarity’s public release of its “program” at the end of the union’s national congress. Stories of efforts to oust Kania by those favoring martial law abounded, and were supported by the CIA’s clandestine sources. Just three days before Jaruzelski replaced Kania as head of the party, the active duty service of military conscripts was extended. And at the same Central Committee meeting at which the leadership change took place, a resolution was issued that even the press interpreted as a call for martial law “if necessary.”

The Regime Launches Its Counteroffensive

On 20 October, two days after Kania’s removal, police used force and tear gas to disperse a crowd of protesters in Katowice, an industrial center in southern Poland, in what the U.S. press described as “the worst outbreak of street violence in fourteen months.” The crowd was protesting the arrest of three Solidarity activists who had been distributing anti-Soviet leaflets.

8. “Poland: Political Maneuvering,” decl. *NID*, 19 October 1981.

The next day, at least three more Solidarity activists in Wroclaw, a provincial capital in southwest Poland, were detained on the same charge—“anti-Soviet propaganda.” This time the government accompanied the arrests with a ban on public gatherings in the entire province. The regional chapter of Solidarity threatened a general strike if the activists were not released, and local transit workers initiated preliminary steps to carry out a strike independent of the Solidarity decision.

After one day, the police released the detained activists and lifted the ban on public gatherings, causing the local transit workers to call off their strike. The *NID* suggested that the government actions initially may have been intended to prompt Solidarity leaders to make some effort to control anti-Soviet agitators. This intelligence reporting also said that the regime “may be reluctant to push too hard for a confrontation,” pointing out the conciliatory action taken by the government in releasing the activists, and the Polish official media’s portrayal of Solidarity as having played a positive role in containing reactions in Wroclaw.⁹

Solidarity’s leadership, however, had a darker view, claiming the arrests had been a calculated move to spark local confrontations and divide the union. The violent attacks on the protesters had been carried out on the eve of the meeting at which Solidarity’s National Commission was scheduled to decide whether to go ahead with a nationwide strike to protest of the government’s latest price hikes.

The confrontational attitude that the union had brought away from its congress had already been heightened by the party’s move in mid-October for a parliamentary ban on strikes. Intelligence assessments said then that Solidarity’s leaders would not risk further inflaming an already rebellious union rank and file by surrendering—even for a short time—what the union members considered their principal weapon. The *NID* had said in its earlier reporting that if the regime persisted with its demands for a strike ban—which required approval by the parliament—Solidarity probably would feel compelled to carry out its threatened national strike.¹⁰

Under these circumstances, the government’s provocative actions on the eve of the scheduled meeting to decide on the national strike eliminated

9. “Poland: Incident in Katowice,” decl. *NID*, 21 October 1981; “Poland: Government Resolve,” decl. *NID*, 22 October 1981; “Divisions Within Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 23 October 1981; “Polish Police Battling 5,000 Protesting Arrests;” *NYT*, 21 October 1981, A15; “Poles In Katowice Angry Over Brawl,” *NYT*, 22 October, A3.

10. “Poland: Criticism of Leadership,” decl. *NID*, 15 October 1981; “Poland: Pressure on Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 17 October 1981. See also “Poland Says Union Seeks Dictatorship,” *NYT*, 17 October 1981, 3.

whatever maneuver room Walesa and other Solidarity moderates might have had. The union's National Coordinating Commission announced that the strike would be carried out on 28 October, and added that if its demands were not met, Solidarity would conduct more such strikes and would also take over the food distribution system.¹¹

The government immediately responded by announcing that Polish army troops were being assigned a major role in helping to ensure "law and order." This was in fact the implementation of the move that had been announced back at the end of September. Groups of soldiers were to be deployed nationwide with authority to suppress "street provocations across the country," "counteract problems on the spot," and "solve disputes." They troop contingents would also assist in distributing food and fixing transportation breakdowns. Additional details provided by the government over the next few days disclosed that some eight hundred groups of three to four soldiers would be assigned to cover two thousand villages in the Polish countryside. The deployments were to begin on 26 October and all groups were to be in place within about two to three days.¹²

The assessment in the *NID* said the regime was apparently hoping to use the populace's widespread respect for the military to curb local unrest. The *NID* analysis said the recent incidents in Katowice and Wroclaw may have convinced the Polish leaders that the police were not effective in enforcing the regime's new, tougher policies. Another objective suggested by intelligence analysts was to intimidate Solidarity in the face of its call for a national strike. Intelligence analysts said the plan to initially dispatch the groups of soldiers to rural areas, where Solidarity's presence was low and respect for the military high, reflected the regime's desire to begin an enlarged role of the military in a manner designed to avoid negative reactions.

This intelligence assessment said the troop deployment "does not appear to include any restrictions on civil liberties . . . even though the measures are a plausible step toward some kind of martial law." The analysis nonetheless pointed out that "The government has moved closer to its final option

11. "Poland: Government Resolve," decl. *NID*, 22 October 1981; "Divisions Within Solidarity," decl. *NID*, 23 October 1981; and "Poles In Katowice Angry Over Brawl," *NYT*, 22 October 1981, A3.

12. "Poland: New Role for the Military," decl. *NID*, 24 October 1981; "Poland: Deployment of Troops," decl. *NID*, 26 October 1981; "Poland Deploying Troops for Action in Local Disputes," *NYT*, 24 October 1981, 1; "Warsaw Demands Solidarity Cancel General Walkout," *NYT*, 26 October 1981, A1. The initial public announcement that such a move was intended is described in Chapter 11, 178.

because it now may be testing the reliability of its military to perform a domestic police function, and the willingness of the Polish populace to respect the military in that role.” One more step in the enlarged military role occurred on 28 October with the announcement that General Siwicki, chief of the Polish general staff (and overseer of the detailed martial law planning) had been elevated to candidate member of the party Politburo. The reporting received by the CIA over the preceding two months had shown Swicki to be one of the key officials favoring the implementation of martial law.¹³

U.S. reactions reflected a mix of concern and uncertainty. On the day the deployment of soldier groups was announced, a State Department press conference declared frankly that the United States “did not know” what the effect would be, and that “time will tell.” The U.S. Embassy in Warsaw was reported to have said that the situation was calm at the moment. Secretary of State Haig repeated the “time will tell” caution a day later, saying that the United States was closely watching the developments. Secretary of Defense Weinberger, on the other hand, was quoted as saying that the Poles were in danger of being “forced by the USSR to take action,” and that “armed intervention by the USSR is an even greater danger.”¹⁴

Meanwhile, wildcat strikes continued to erupt. The largest involved a regional Solidarity chapter in western Poland (at Zielona Gora) where an open-ended work stoppage was being carried out by as many as 150,000 workers. On the eve of Solidarity’s scheduled national strike, local strikes of some level were underway in thirty-six of Poland’s forty-nine provinces, with some 280,000 workers reported to be participating. More strikes were threatened, as workers at a major factory in Warsaw declared their intent to strike in support of an already ongoing sit-in by 12,000 textile workers.¹⁵

13. “Poland: New Role for the Military,” decl. *NID*, 24 October 1981; “Poland: Deployment of Troops,” decl. *NID*, 26 October 1981; “Poland: Tough Government Stance,” decl. *NID*, 27 October 1981; “Poland: Solidarity’s Strike,” decl. *NID*, 28 October 1981; “Poland: Continuing the Dialogue,” decl. *NID*, 29 October 1981. Also “Poland Deploying Troops for Action in Local Disputes,” *NYT*, 24 October 1981, 1; “Warsaw Demands Solidarity Cancel General Walkout,” *NYT*, 26 October 1981, A1; “Warsaw Deploys Small Army Units Across the Nation,” *NYT*, 27 October 1981, A1.

14. “U.S. Unsure of Impact,” *NYT*, 24 October 1981, 5; “Haig Says U.S. Watches,” *NYT*, 25 October 1981, 21; “Weinberger Warns of Repression,” *NYT*, 26 October 1981, A10.

15. “Divisions Within Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 23 October 1981; “Poland: Deployment of Troops,” decl. *NID*, 26 October 1981; “Strikes Spreading, Solidarity Meets,” *NYT*, 23 October 1981, A1; “Poland Strikes Ignore Army Plan and Union Appeal,” *NYT*, 25 October 1981, 1.

The regime mounted a strong propaganda campaign, asserting that Solidarity's intent to impose a national strike on top of the ongoing regional and local strikes was "an impending national disaster [that] . . . would destroy the economy and any possibility of agreement." The *NID* described this propaganda campaign as an effort to erode support for Solidarity and depict the union as "irresponsible for having gone ahead with its action in the face of Poland's severe economic problems." This intelligence assessment said the regime was attempting to "contrast Solidarity's [strike] move with its own dramatic efforts, demonstrated by sending military groups throughout country."¹⁶

On 28 October, Solidarity's one-hour national general strike took place without incident. The Polish regime asserted that the strike had failed to achieve its participation goals, an assertion that both the intelligence analysts and Western media interpreted as an effort to portray ebbing support and cohesion in Solidarity. U.S. intelligence assessments agreed with Solidarity's claim that the strike had been a successful demonstration of the union's effectiveness in marshaling its forces. High-level union officials acknowledged to the Western press that a driving motivation for the strike had been the hope of stemming the fragmentation generated by ongoing wildcat strikes.¹⁷

Two days after the strike, Jaruzelski formally addressed the Polish parliament. Referring to discussions that had already been taking place behind the scenes, he said he "knew" that a group from the parliament was preparing a resolution to put an end to the strikes. He declared that if the proposed resolution failed to pass or failed to end the strikes, he would return to the parliament to seek a formal law banning strikes. He also announced that, because of the "existing dangerous situation," he had already presented to the parliament a draft law granting the government "extraordinary means of action in the interests of protection of the citizens of the state."¹⁸

The parliament passed the resolution demanding an end to strikes. It did not take up the government's proposed law authorizing "extraordinary

16. "Poland: Tough Government Stance," decl. *NID*, 27 October 1981; "Warsaw Demands Solidarity Cancel General Walkout," *NYT*, 26 October 1981, A1.

17. "Poland: Solidarity's Strike," decl. *NID*, 28 October 1981; "Poland: Continuing the Dialogue," decl. *NID*, 29 October 1981; "Millions of Poles Strike For An Hour in Food Protest," *NYT*, 29 October 1981, A1.

18. "Polish Chief Asks Aid of Parliament to Stop Walkouts," *NYT*, 31 October 1981, 1. Jaruzelski's speech to the Parliament is printed in FBIS *East European Daily*, 2 November 1981, G1-II. A summary is in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 433-34.

means,” but did include in its resolution a declaration that, if the strikes did not cease, the parliament would “examine proposals to provide the government with such legal means as are required by the situation.”¹⁹

The description of these developments in the *NID* said that Jaruzelski “chose a moderate course by not confronting Solidarity with a legal ban on strikes.” The *NID* assessment also said that even though he had “temporized” on the issue, his public commitment to follow up with a request for legislation would reduce his future room for maneuver. According to at least one press report, however, there was some evidence that Jaruzelski “chose” not to push harder for a formal law against strikes only after learning there was still strong resistance in the parliament, and that it was unlikely to pass. Thus an alternative interpretation could have been that the confrontation Jaruzelski chose to avoid was not with Solidarity but with the parliament. Under this interpretation, by showing himself willing to first try the more moderate parliamentary action, he may have hoped to enhance his leverage in the predictable event that Solidarity did not comply with the resolution.²⁰

Jaruzelski’s parliamentary moves were in fact interpreted by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) as part of a larger pattern with far more ominous implications than were described in *NID* reporting. A *Defense Intelligence Appraisal* disseminated in early November, reviewing the actions of the Polish regime since the mid-October party plenum, concluded that: “the way has been cleared for Warsaw to declare a state of emergency or to impose martial law. Although factors indicate that full martial law may not be enforced immediately, events suggest martial law may be imposed in Poland this winter.”²¹

The DIA analysis described this conclusion as based on the following factors:

- Kania’s replacement as head of the party: in contrast to the *NID*, the DIA *Appraisal* explicitly listed Kania’s opposition to martial law as one of the main factors leading to his resignation under mounting pressures from a growing hard line in the party leadership

19. “Parliament Bids Polish Workers Stop All Strikes,” *NYT*, 1 November 1981, 1.

20. “Poland: Political Maneuvering,” decl. *NID*, 31 October 1981. Western press also reported evidence that a majority of parliament members would oppose a formal law banning strikes. See John Darnton, “Polish Chief Asks Aid of Parliament. . . .,” *NYT*, 31 October 1981, 1. Timothy Garton Ash, who like Darnton was covering the events on the scene, gives a detailed account of this in *Polish Revolution*, 242.

21. “Poland: Martial Law,” decl. *Defense Intelligence Appraisal*, 4 November 1981, in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*.

- Indications of a tougher position taken by Jaruzelski: the DIA pointed out that by simultaneously holding the positions of party first secretary, prime minister, and defense minister, Jaruzelski now directly controlled all the formal instruments of state power. He served as both chairman and deputy chairman of the National Defense Committee. The DIA analysis described Jaruzelski's attitude as hardening in response to the increasing threat to regime authority manifested by Solidarity's national congress and the union's subsequent actions, the increasing threats of both national and wildcat strikes, and pressures from the USSR and his own military hierarchy.
- The regime's increasing demonstrations of willingness to adopt tougher measures: these included the extension of military service by two months, the employment of military forces to augment police, the increased security patrols, and the expulsion of certain party members for being members of Solidarity.
- And most recently, Jaruzelski's effort to enlist parliamentary action—resulting in the parliament's resolution demanding a cessation of strikes—and his public declaration to seek legislation granting him extraordinary powers if the strike-ban resolution was ignored.

The DIA assessment pointed out that the growing disunity of Solidarity, despite the achievement of some economic agreements with the regime, was eroding the union leaders' ability to control regional chapters in the face of mounting food and fuel shortages. The DIA said this would probably result in continued and heightened civil unrest, which would increase the pressures for a crackdown.

The case presented in this disseminated analytic report, especially if melded with the recent information from Kuklinski and reports of high-level meetings over the preceding six weeks, would appear to have provided a basis for questioning whether the prospect of martial law had become significantly higher than the "less than fifty-fifty" described in the Embassy assessment a month earlier. What might move the estimate from "less than fifty-fifty" to "better than fifty-fifty?" No such appraisal appears to have been done elsewhere in the Intelligence Community or within the policy components.

Setting the Stage

The absence of more widespread concern by other U.S. intelligence analysts and policy officials may have been at least in part the result of Jaruzelski's

two-pronged tactics. At the same time that he was seeking tougher legislation from the Polish parliament, he was also promoting his “Front of National Accord.” He had surfaced this concept back at the mid-October Central Committee meeting at which he replaced Kania as head of the party, describing it as an effort “to seek solutions to the economic and social turmoil in Poland.” He proposed a consultative council of government officials that would also include Solidarity leader Walesa and the Catholic Primate Archbishop Glemp.²² The proposal was notably vague, however, on the question of what authority other than “consultation” the non-government participants would have in this process, and this was a source of suspicion for Walesa.

The “Front” proposal was discussed at a 4 November meeting of Jaruzelski, Walesa, and the Polish Archbishop. In the intelligence reporting as well as in press coverage, the fact that this meeting took place was given as much prominence as its subject. The *NID* said the agreement to hold the meeting “appeared to be a signal from moderates on both sides that some form of cooperation is necessary if the country is to come to grips with its dismal economic condition.” The day after the meeting, the *NID* reported that the three leaders “took the first step forward for consultation and cooperation,” and “agreed to hold further business-like consultations.” Walesa reportedly considered Jaruzelski’s proposed ‘Front’ a step in the right direction, although Solidarity remained committed to establishing its own “Economic and Social Council” as called for in the union’s “program.”²³

For the next three weeks, the budding high-level talks between the regime, Solidarity, and the church were the most prominent issue in the *NID* reporting on Poland. The “big three” meeting of Walesa, Jaruzelski, and the Archbishop was assessed as having generated “cautious optimism,” and opened the way for what promised to be the “most comprehensive talks” since well before the party and union had held their respective congresses. On 11 November, the party Politburo formally endorsed the Front of National Accord, an action described by intelligence analysts as indicating support for Jaruzelski’s efforts to find a political solution to the country’s problems. “Solidarity and regime leaders have emphasized the need

22. “Poland: Pressure on Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 17 October 1981.

23. “Poland: High-Level Talks on Cooperation,” decl. *NID*, 4 November 1981; “Poland: Three Way Consultations,” decl. *NID*, 5 November 1981; “Heads of Party, Union, and Church Confer in Poland,” *NYT*, 5 November 1981, A3.

for some form of institutionalized cooperation,” according to an intelligence report. This intelligence report said Jaruzelski had told the Politburo, “Poland can only be governed with the support of the people and that, if this can be accomplished by a coalition of power centers, then it must be accepted.”²⁴

Solidarity’s national leadership had already undertaken a major effort to bring an end to wildcat strikes. Walesa’s game plan sought to combine a mechanism for disciplining defiant local chapters with a commitment by the national leadership to be more active in representing local grievances. He personally visited many of the striking locals to urge them to return to work, in order to give the talks at the national level a chance to produce positive results. Not unexpectedly, he had mixed results. CIA analysts nonetheless judged that the ongoing strikes were being sufficiently contained to be unlikely to endanger the talks between Solidarity and the government.²⁵

On 17 November, party and union negotiators held their first meeting in the process initiated by the “big three” summit. Describing the outlook, the *NID* said “the willingness to begin talks indicates that the moderate points of view still predominate, [although] they will be sorely tested in the coming months.” The talks could last for months, according to this intelligence analysis. If they succeeded: “Poland will have made a significant step toward greater stability. If [the talks] fail, there will be additional radicalization of Solidarity’s rank and file and leadership that will substantially increase the prospects for serious clashes with the government. At stake is the creation of the legal and institutional base for a pluralistic political structure.”²⁶

This intelligence assessment pointed out that both sides would have to give some ground if the talks were to succeed. It said the party would have to relinquish some powers while Solidarity would have to agree to political structures that enabled the party to retain the appearance of its leading role. On balance, according to the *NID* report, “moderates on both sides are approaching the talks in a positive and optimistic way.”

24. “Poland: Talks Slated,” decl. *NID*, 9 November 1981; “Poland: Jaruzelski Proposal Endorsed,” decl. *NID*, 12 November 1981.

25. “Poland: Trying to Control Strikes,” decl. *NID*, 3 November 1981; “Poland: Jaruzelski Proposal Endorsed,” decl. *NID*, 12 November 1981. See also “Industrial Unrest in Poland Persists,” *NYT*, 11 November 1981, A3; “200,000 Poles End 22-Day Wildcat Strike but Other Protests Go On,” *NYT*, 13 November 1981, A1.

26. “Poland: Back to the Bargaining Table,” decl. *NID*, 17 November 1981.

Intelligence analysts described this as all part of a difficult process whose outcome was uncertain. They pointed out that while Jaruzelski had some latitude to seek accommodation, if the compromises he was willing to accept did not satisfy Solidarity's requirements he "seem[ed] willing to take forceful measures." The daily intelligence reporting in this time frame clearly did not, however, convey any sense of a martial law threat other than as a longer-term potentiality if the current efforts at cooperation broke down and confrontations re-escalated. The picture presented in the daily intelligence reporting showed no reflection of the information the CIA had obtained in the preceding two months that the leadership was moving closer to martial law. On the contrary, reporting in the *NID* portrayed a greater prospect of some lasting accommodation—mainly because of Jaruzelski's combination of political strength and apparent commitment—than had been seen in the daily intelligence reporting at any time in the preceding year.

It did not take long, however, for the talks to become stalemated. The regime insisted that before any serious substantive talks could begin, Solidarity had to sign up to the fuzzily defined Front of National Accord. Solidarity, on the other hand, said it would join the Front only after the talks demonstrated that the process of cooperation and consultation would produce some concrete results.

Meanwhile, shortly after the talks began, the Polish government declared that the groups of soldiers that had been deployed around the countryside four weeks earlier were being recalled. But then on 23 November the government announced that similar but somewhat larger groups—ten to fifteen soldiers each—were to be deployed in all of the forty-nine provincial capitals and other large cities. The total number of troops to be deployed in each city would vary from a few dozen to more than five hundred, depending on the size of each city. According to the announcement, these groups of soldiers would include specialists in medical support, supply, communications, and other technical areas to help the people prepare for the hardships of the winter. The troops were tasked with insuring the efficient utilization of local resources, including provision of fuels, electric power, transportation, and health services.

The *NID* initially speculated that Jaruzelski may have decided to withdraw the troops from the countryside because they had not succeeded in removing bottlenecks from the economy, and the regime had already gained as much as could be expected from the show of determination. Upon learning that new soldier groups were to be deployed, however, intelligence analysts then said it indicated that the regime saw a need to demonstrate its

willingness to do the same thing for the urban areas that it had done earlier for the country villages. No mention of any potential connection with martial law appears in the declassified *NID* report of this deployment, although the final paragraph is redacted.²⁷ (The report on the deployment of soldier groups to the countryside a month earlier had included an observation that it was a “plausible step toward some kind of martial law,” although the same report said there was no indication that this was its purpose.)

At the same time all this was occurring, the CIA learned that Polish military authorities were meeting with high-level military delegations from Moscow. On 18 and 19 November, a group of nine Soviet and other Warsaw Pact General Staff officers met in Warsaw with the Polish General Staff. This delegation was led by the Deputy Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the Soviet General Staff. The principal subject of the meeting, according to Gates, was “documentation” pertaining to the implementation of martial law. Less than a week after that, the Polish press announced that an even higher-ranking Soviet military delegation—led by Marshal Kulikov and his deputy, General Gribkov—was back in Poland for two days of meetings with Jaruzelski. The U.S. Intelligence Community (and most of the Western press corps) knew that Kulikov was the Soviet point man for coordinating martial law, whether it was to be conducted with or without outside intervention.²⁸

The Soviet and Polish military officers participating in these meetings knew the United States had the details of the martial law plans and the implementation preparations that had been underway since mid-September. And *they knew that the United States knew they knew*. Because they knew that at the same time they were holding these meetings in Poland, Kuklinski was meeting with CIA officers in the United States, it is plausible, albeit speculative, that this prompted the meetings with Soviet general staff officers on 17 to 18 November to review “documentation” on martial law.

27. “Poland: New Troop Deployment,” decl. *NID*, 25 November 1981.

28. Gates describes the first of these delegations in *From the Shadows*, 235. He does not address the Kulikov delegation that arrived a few days later. This Kulikov visit was reported by the Polish media in “W. Jaruzelski przyjal A. Kulikowa i A. Gribkowa,” *Tribjuna Luda*, 25 November 1981. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations during the Polish Crisis*, document 20, translator’s note 261. No mention of either of these visits appears in the declassified *NID* articles, but this author can testify that both visits were known and reported to policy officials. The final paragraphs of the declassified *NID* articles for 18 and 25 November have been redacted. Given the open source knowledge of the Kulikov visit, the redaction of the paragraph describing his visit would doubtless have been because of discussion of its potential linkage to other activities going on at the time that were known through more sensitive sources.

Kuklinski Escapes

In an operation that the U.S. ambassador at the time has since described as a “real cloak and dagger affair,” Kuklinski and his wife and two sons escaped Poland on 7 November and made it into West Germany the next day. On 11 November, he flew to the United States aboard a military aircraft.²⁹

As soon as his stress gauge permitted after he arrived in the United States, Kuklinski began exhaustive “debriefing” sessions with his CIA interlocutors. Unfortunately, nothing from the information he provided after his escape from Poland has yet been declassified. Kuklinski has, however, described in public interviews some of the events and discussions he was involved in just prior to his departure from Poland. It would be reasonable to presume that, at a minimum, he gave the CIA at the time of his arrival in the United States the same information that he has since given to the public.

Kuklinski has said that toward the end of September (sometime following the meeting he had described in his 15 September message to the CIA), preparations for martial law accelerated. He said that the Operations Directorate of the Polish General Staff, of which he was a deputy chief, was designated as the main center for directing the martial law conditions. For this purpose, the directorate had been augmented with officers from the internal security services and from key civilian ministries. At the end of September, while Solidarity was engaged in the second round of its national congress and reports were circulating in the public media that the Polish leaders were examining martial law options, work stations were set up with special communications equipment for directing operations under martial law.

After what Kuklinski describes as a month of hectic activity, a highly placed Polish military officer informed him on 31 October that “the decision [to impose martial law] has been made. At this moment Jaruzelski is coordinating the deadline and plan for the operations with the Allies.”

Two days later, Kuklinski and a small group of his colleagues were summoned to the office of a deputy chief of the General Staff and told that a

29. Kuklinski gave a partial description of his escape in his 1987 interview. See “Suppression of Solidarity,” 90–95. Ambassador Meehan describes his perspective on Kuklinski’s escape in “Reflections on the Polish Crisis,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 46. The “cloak and dagger” quote is from a personal conversation he had with Mark Kramer, cited in “Colonel Kuklinski and the Polish Crisis,” *CWIHP* 11, 49. According to Kramer (footnote 8 of the same article), Kuklinski gave more details on his departure “itinerary” in an interview in October 1997, parts of which were broadcast on Polish radio a month later.

“reliable source” had reported that the United States knew about the latest version of the martial law plan. After narrowly eluding a direct “confess or deny” confrontation at this meeting, Kuklinski saw what he believed to be many signs that he was under surveillance. In the next few days he began preparing for his escape. In his first public account years later, he said that one of the factors that persuaded him to leave was the clear indication that martial law was going to happen and there was nothing he could do to stop it.³⁰

Based on the detailed reporting Kuklinski had already provided on the martial law plans and the additional information he offered after he arrived in the United States, the CIA prepared a report for top U.S. national security officials stating that the Polish regime, at the same time it had been pushing its “Front of National Accord,” had essentially completed its preparations for implementing a military suppression. In providing this sensitive information, CIA military analysts pointed out that with the Polish forces in this posture, martial law could occur suddenly with little warning. (Especially since Kuklinski was no longer in Poland.) The CIA did not address in this report the question of whether this meant a decision to carry out this action had been made or was close to being made, despite what Kuklinski said he had been told by “a highly placed military officer.” And, as is described below, this information apparently was not sent to the policy officials until sometime in the first week of December, and then to only a select few at the most senior level.

The Final Act

On 27 November, shortly after the conclusion of the meetings with the delegation of Soviet military officials headed by Kulikov, the Polish party put out word that during the past three weeks (the three weeks following the initiation of talks on the “Front of National Accord”), the government had begun surveillance of “opposition groups and had started investigations of some four hundred crimes against the state.” The Western press already had reported signs a few days earlier of a tougher policy on dissident groups, when police raided the flat of prominent dissident Jacek Kuron. The government’s official charge against the group was “setting up an organization of a political character.” That same weekend the state prosecutor warned another “Group For Defense of Political Prisoners” meeting in Radom that

30. Kuklinski, “Suppression of Solidarity,” 90–95.

they were in violation of the law and subject to arrest.³¹

Also on 27 November, Jaruzelski announced at a Central Committee meeting that he had instructed the government to present a draft antistrike law to the parliament. The *NID* described the action as Jaruzelski's fulfillment of his pledge at the end of October to seek binding legislation if the parliamentary resolution for a voluntary end to strikes was ignored. The details of the draft law given to parliament were not known at the time, but the intelligence report said:

“. . . it is likely to be confined to laying the groundwork for prohibiting some strikes and perhaps to giving the parliament the right to limit the duration of all strikes. Such provisions were included in a draft trade union law—agreed to by Solidarity earlier this year—which was never enacted. . . .

A total ban on strikes would be strongly resisted by Solidarity's leadership, would scuttle current union-government talks, and would provoke considerable opposition in parliament.”³²

Other Western observers, according to press reports, were somewhat less sanguine about the likely terms of the draft law, pointing out that a strike ban of significant proportion would go the heart of the Gdansk agreement. And the terms of the law revealed in the press a day later did in fact call for total ban on strikes in industries considered “critical” and “constraints” on strikes in other industries. Who would define which industries were “critical” was not specified. The party publicly demanded that the draft law on strikes be put forward for an immediate vote, saying that the government must have extraordinary powers to curb labor unrest. On 29 November, Jaruzelski proclaimed, “the destructive process has to be stopped or it will lead to a confrontation, to a state of war.” These actions are not addressed in the declassified intelligence materials.³³

A few days later, the regime made its most extreme use of force since the Bydgoszcz incident. Cadets at the firefighters' training academy in

31. “Polish Police Break Up Meeting in Dissidents Home,” *NYT*, 23 November 1981, A12; “Poland: Consideration of Anti-Strike Law,” decl. *NID*, 28 November 1981. The raid on Kuron's flat and the threat leveled at the Group for Defense of Political Prisoners is not addressed in any of the declassified intelligence reporting.

32. “Poland: Consideration of Anti-Strike Law,” decl. *NID*, 28 November 1981.

33. “Politburo Tells Poland to Pass Anti-strike Law,” *NYT*, 28 November 1981, 1; “Polish Party Urges Special Attention,” *NYT*, 29 November 1981, 1; “Jaruzelski Warns Poland on

Warsaw had been on strike since 26 November, protesting a government move to place the academy under the sole jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. When the Ministry countered by shutting down the academy, some three hundred cadets occupied the building. On 1 December, police squads equipped with water cannons surrounded the building, and a large crowd gathered to watch the events.

A report in the *NID* of 2 December said the regime had denied intentions to use force. Using force, said the intelligence report, risked setting off a reaction by the crowd of observers, and provoking other strikes and demonstrations.³⁴ But later that same day the regime did indeed use force; some one thousand police crashed through the barriers and landed helicopters on the roof. The cadets put up no resistance and were removed without serious injury.

The *NID* posited the next day that the Polish regime's motive in resorting to force was to demonstrate to the population as well as to the Warsaw Pact defense and foreign ministers—who were then holding their annual meetings—its resolve to oppose future strikes. The intelligence report also said that conservatives in the regime may have pushed for the use of force in the hope that Solidarity would react with a strike, which could be used as further justification for pushing the parliament to enact the antistrike legislation. Union leaders were indeed likely to press for some response, according to the intelligence assessment, but Walesa was expected to try to hold down the reaction and prevent the confrontation from escalating.³⁵

The following afternoon and evening, a long and heated meeting of Solidarity's leaders took place in Radom, concluding with a union public statement listing the violence at the firefighters academy as only one of many unacceptable recent actions by the regime. The statement attacked the regime's unwillingness to change the system of industrial management, and its efforts to push through a law granting the government extraordinary powers. Solidarity threatened a general strike if the parliament adopted the emergency powers law.

A number of other far more radical steps were raised in Solidarity's meeting, some going so far as to include setting up worker militias and a provisional government. Walesa temporarily deflected these proposals by insisting

"Labor Unrest," *NYT*, 30 November, A13. There are no declassified intelligence reports on Poland for 29 November thru 1 December.

34. "Poland: Tense Confrontation," decl. *NID*, 2 December 1981.

35. "Poland: Response by Solidarity," decl. *NID*, 3 December 1981.

that only the meeting of the full National Coordinating Commission scheduled for the following week—11 December—could commit the union to such action. The union leaders then publicized a list of demands to be considered at this upcoming meeting—demands that if implemented would in effect give Solidarity power sharing status with the government on economic and social matters. The heat being generated in this situation was such that in reporting on the developments, the *NID* saw a need to point out that there was no information to indicate that Polish military units had been placed on alert.³⁶

Some of the wilder proposals that had been tossed onto the floor during Solidarity's meeting in Radom were shortly hung out for public scrutiny. Excerpts from tape recordings that had been made of the meeting, presumed to have been produced through regime connivance, began to appear in the government-run media three days later. The Polish media asserted that the tapes disclosed that local union chapters were preparing for physical confrontations with the government, and that they exposed union leaders as “madmen” with “sick ambitions.” Among the taped segments that drew the most attention was an exclamation by Walesa that “confrontation was inevitable,” and polemic by other speakers regarding a “provisional government.” Solidarity did not attempt to deny the comments, but claimed they were taken out of context.³⁷

The *NID* described this as “the most coordinated and vitriolic media campaign ever against Solidarity.” The intelligence analysis said the regime was “probably trying to demonstrate that it was not impotent in the face of union pressure, and hopes to encourage greater opposition to the union in local disputes . . . and probably hopes the campaign will further discredit the union.” Additional regime objectives, according to the intelligence assessment, may have been to split the moderates and militants in the union, and to provide further justification for the extraordinary powers law being sought from the parliament. The intelligence assessment said that the regime’s actions would “raise tensions and prevent serious substantive negotiations until after the new year.”³⁸ Such serious substantive negotiations, however, were not to be.

Solidarity’s National Commission opened its scheduled 11 December

36. “Poland: Statement by Solidarity,” decl. *NID*, 4 December 1981. The full text of the Solidarity statement was published in the Solidarity bulletin *Agencja Solidarność* 58, a copy of which is in Raina, *Poland, 1981*, 455.

37. “Warsaw Releases Secret Union Tapes,” *WP*, 8 December 1981, A1.

38. “Poland: Regime’s Media Campaign,” decl. *NID*, 9 December 1981.

meeting in Gdansk with a full agenda. It had to design the union's future policy in the face of increasing manifestations of the government's tougher line and willingness to use force against demonstrations and strikes. On the first day the union's commission approved a resolution calling for a twenty-four-hour general strike if the parliament passed the bill granting the government extraordinary powers. The commission also rejected the provision in the draft trade union law then before the parliament that authorized ninety-day suspensions of the right to strike. Solidarity threatened to shut down the national radio and television if the government persisted in its maneuvers to weed out employees who belonged to Solidarity.

On the evening of 12 December, word began to be received in Washington that telephone and telex communications between Poland, Western Europe, and the United States had been cut, that the Polish border had been closed, and that many Polish citizens were being arrested. At CIA headquarters, an alert was sent out to the analysts who had been following the situation in Poland, and they convened in the CIA Operations Center. The DCI and his executive assistant also came in later, as did the director and deputy director of the office in charge of the operations center.³⁹

A debate ensued over how to interpret the events and whether and how to report them to the White House and senior national security officials—was it another of the localized crackdowns that had been seen in recent days, or were we seeing the beginning of martial law. Those arguing that it was far more than a local action included analysts who had studied the contents of Kuklinski's reporting of the martial law plans, and who were convinced that the actions taking place fit those plans. Even some analysts who had previously been skeptical about the willingness and ability of the Polish regime to impose martial law believed that was what now seemed to be taking place. Others were more uncertain, suggesting that what was taking place was indeed a localized action. They did not want to be seen as sending out a false alarm.

Shortly after midnight EST, one of the military analysts—who knew that the martial law plan called for its implementation to be formally announced at 0600 (Warsaw time) on the morning after the arrests and the deployment of army and internal security units had begun—left the discussion to check for what he expected to be incoming information. He returned not long afterward to present the discussants with the message that Jaruzelski had just announced over Polish radio that martial law had been declared.

39. For the record and to avoid any charges of obfuscation, the author was at that time the deputy director of the office that ran the Operations Center.

Chapter 13: Caught Off Guard

For more than six weeks prior to the imposition of martial law, the U.S. government had been notably silent on all aspects relating to a possible military crackdown in Poland. This was in stark contrast to the klaxons sounded and reprisals threatened on earlier occasions, when the concern was a Soviet invasion or Soviet military intervention in collaboration with Polish leaders.

Jaruzelski has repeatedly claimed that Washington's silence, with no protests to the Polish government or warnings to Solidarity of imminent martial law, was a signal that U.S. authorities endorsed his "internal solution" to head off an "inevitable" Soviet invasion. He has said that when Kuklinski disappeared from Warsaw, the Polish leadership knew immediately that the United States had the details of the martial law plans, and of the recent preparations for carrying them out. It was Jaruzelski's military regime, in fact, that slipped the information to the Western media in the mid-1980s that the United States had an intelligence source on the Polish General Staff with detailed knowledge on the martial law plans. This Polish media campaign also made sure that it was known that the source had been evacuated from Poland more than a month prior to the imposition of martial law, giving Washington full latitude for publicizing his information. The effect of these disclosures was demonstrated in a U.S. press article in 1986 stating that "the U.S. administration could have publicly revealed these [martial law] plans to the world and warned Solidarity."¹

1. "CIA had Secret Agent on Polish General Staff," *WP*, 4 June 1986, A1, from which the above quoted passage is taken. This article by Bob Woodward and Michael Dobbs was the result of information passed to them by the public spokesman for Jaruzelski's ruling Military Council of National Salvation. A revealing account of the machinations of the Jaruzelski junta in putting out this story is given by Ben Fischer, "The Vilification and Vindication of Colonel Kuklinski," in the unclassified journal, *Studies in Intelligence*, no. 9, summer 2000, published by the Center for the Study of Intelligence, and which can be obtained from the Web site www.cia.gov/csi. As regards Jaruzelski's public assertions, in addition to his memoirs, *Stan Wojenny Dlaczego* [A State of War: Why?] (Warsaw: BGW, 1992), 356–58, he has said the same thing in interviews with Western journalists. See, for example, "Polish Officer Was U.S. Window

Leaving aside the self-serving aspects of the alibi, it is difficult to contest the basic point—that the United States had the plans, the Polish leaders knew the United States had the plans, and U.S. intelligence officials knew that the Polish leaders knew the United States had the plans. Under such circumstances, it would not have been unreasonable for the Polish leaders to assume U.S. officials would expect them to be watching for signals of Washington’s reaction. And the reaction they saw was nothing.

About two weeks after Kuklinski’s escape (and three weeks before martial law was imposed) Jaruzelski met with the U.S. ambassador to Poland, Francis Meehan. The meeting was at the ambassador’s request, just prior to his scheduled return to Washington for consultations. Ambassador Meehan has since suggested that because Jaruzelski already knew by then that the United States had the martial law plans, he could have avoided the meeting if he was concerned about what message or questions the ambassador would be offering under instruction from Washington. Meehan has speculated that Jaruzelski went through with the meeting as an effort to mislead by presenting an image of “business as usual.”²

An equally plausible explanation for Jaruzelski’s behavior, however, could have been his desire to find out what the United States was going to do with its information on the nature and status of the martial law plans. It would have been understandable for him to have assumed that the U.S. ambassador to Poland had been given the latest—and most authoritative—U.S. intelligence on martial law, and that the ambassador knew that Jaruzelski knew this information had been given to the United States. Under these circumstances, it would have been a bit naïve for Jaruzelski to expect he could sell a business as usual image simply by accepting the meeting and not raising the subject. He would have had every reason to suspect that a U.S. ambassador’s request for a meeting, after Kuklinski had escaped to Washington and had presumably told U.S. officials that the Polish regime was close to imposing martial law, was for the purpose of delivering the initial U.S. reaction. The fact that there had been no public reaction in the United States might have reinforced a perception that the United States was intending to deliver its reaction through a private, diplomatic channel.

on Soviet War Plans,” *WP*, 27 September 1992, A1; and recently, “Jaruzelski: ‘Le Mur est d’abord tombé en Pologne’” [The Wall First Fell in Poland], *Le Figaro*, 7 November 1999, 4.

2. Francis J. Meehan, “Reflections on the Polish Crisis,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 46.

Under these circumstances, it would have made sense for Jaruzelski to accept the meeting to see what the U.S. ambassador had been instructed to say. Ambassador Meehan has pointed out that the time Jaruzelski set for their meeting was a bit unusual—in the evening from eight thirty to ten. After the meeting it would have been understandable for Jaruzelski to interpret the lack of any statement as a signal that the United States intended to do nothing.

Some Western scholars at least partly share the interpretation propagated by Jaruzelski and company that the lack of action by the United States was a reflection of Washington's view of martial law as the "lesser evil." Earlier U.S. government statements, condemning Moscow for threatening military force while emphasizing the Poles' right "to solve their problems on their own," had already been described by the press as reflecting ambiguity toward a purely internal military crackdown. In the initial stages of martial law, Jaruzelski's move was described by some U.S. officials as offering a solution to Poland's problems short of a violent crackdown. A *Washington Post* editorial addressing the martial law action referred to Jaruzelski as "Poland's Last Chance." Several U.S. officials have since been quoted as saying that there was a sense of relief in some quarters of the U.S. government after the declaration of martial law. Former Secretary of State Haig has written that at the beginning of Jaruzelski's move, "we recognized . . . that . . . for the time being at least, martial law, rather than something worse, had been imposed in Poland."³

Haig also has been quoted as saying that he did not want to warn Solidarity and risk stirring up a violent resistance when the United States had no intention of attempting to deliver assistance. Then-Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Lawrence Eagleberger has offered much the same reasoning for not threatening Jaruzelski, claiming "We would have figured that martial law would have happened anyway," and then what would the United States have done? Ambassador Meehan has expressed a similar perspective.⁴ These concerns had not, however, prevented the United

3. One of the stronger presentations of this view of U.S. attitudes, citing several on-the-record statements by individuals who were in the U.S. government at the time, is in Tina Rosenberg, *Haunted Land*, 208–10. See also Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 73. For an initial U.S. government interpretation of Jaruzelski's move, see "General Wojciech Jaruzelski: A/S EUR Eagleberger to the Secretary," decl. State Department memo of 16 December 1981, in *Poland, 1980–82: Compendium*. The portrayal of Jaruzelski as "Poland's Last Chance" was in the *WP*, 14 December 1981, A16. The Haig quote is in *Caveat*, 247.

4. The Haig and Eagleburger quotes are in Rosenberg, *Haunted Land*, 210. Ambassador

States in earlier situations from warning of potential Soviet invasions and threatening the USSR with reprisals.

While this outlook almost certainly did play a role in the U.S. reactions, it is noteworthy that these statements were after the fact. A month before martial law was imposed, Secretary Haig sent the President a memorandum calling attention to the fragile situation in Poland and emphasizing “the importance of Poland’s peaceful revolution as a demonstration that Moscow’s power could be challenged and confounded.” He said that if what was taking place in Poland could be consolidated, it would be a historic event for the people of Eastern Europe and for Western values, but he was concerned that the democratic forces in Poland would be unable to consolidate their gains without additional U.S. assistance.⁵

On 1 December, the Secretary sent the President another memorandum, saying that in the short interval since his earlier memo, “it has become even clearer that Poland is on the verge of a potentially catastrophic economic crisis . . . that could demoralize and discredit the democratic forces and *lead to the reimposition of an inflexible Soviet-style communist dictatorship. . . . Our entire tradition and security interests dictate prompt action to avert such an outcome . . .* we are backing a struggle for national self-determination and political liberalization against a failing communist regime” (emphasis added).⁶

All of which suggests that if U.S. policy officials had been persuaded somewhat earlier that there was a good chance the Polish regime would impose martial law, they might well have sought a range of options beyond simply accepting it as a lesser evil and reducing their choices to the question of whether to warn Solidarity. They might have attempted to prevent martial law from happening. That certainly was the objective conveyed in Haig’s 1 December memorandum. And deterrence of a Soviet engineered military suppression certainly had been the aim of U.S. public and diplomatic offensives in late 1980 and in the spring of 1981.

The U.S. administration clearly let it be known, however, that it had been taken by surprise and had been unprepared for the sudden imposition of martial law. In the first few days after martial law was declared, Secretary of State Haig said publicly on several occasions that it had come as a sur-

Meehan’s observations are in his article “Reflections on the Polish Crisis,” *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 46.

5. Haig, *Caveat*, 246.

6. Memorandum to the President from Alexander Haig, 1 December 1981, “U.S. Assistance Program for Poland,” in *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*.

prise to him, and that Western governments were “caught off guard.” He said that while he thought the Administration had received “a fair, acceptable level of intelligence in terms of what the Polish armed forces *might* do,” the West was nonetheless surprised by the willingness of the Polish armed forces to carry it out, and by its timing. (He later gave a similar description in his memoirs.) He said that just two days before the crackdown began, the President’s National Security Council had met to authorize \$100 million in grain credits to Poland (as he had proposed in his 1 December memo), and the possibility of imminent martial law had never been raised at this meeting. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who at that time was the Pentagon’s lead official on Soviet and Warsaw Pact political-military affairs, also told the press that the U.S. government “was taken by surprise.” The press described several other officials—unnamed and speaking on background—as having said the same thing.⁷

(I can add personal testimony from my presence at intelligence briefings of three principal members of the National Security Council shortly after martial law was declared. Each briefing was held separately as an informal, private session attended only by the principal official and no more than one or two personal staff officers. In each case, the official said he had not had any warning that martial law might be imminent.)

Perle said in his press interview that the failure to anticipate that the crackdown on Solidarity would be carried out by the Polish army rather than the Soviet army was a result of a “collective failure in intelligence gathering and assessment.” One “senior State Department official speaking on background” publicly took issue with this statement, claiming in a press interview that the Administration had in fact concluded that “drastic Soviet intervention was less likely than a crackdown by the Polish military.” This official did not, however, attempt to argue that the Polish crackdown itself had been foreseen.

Another State Department officer, who was at the time assigned to an interagency working group on Poland, has said more recently that “the prospect of martial law was discussed, but in a way that was completely

7. Haig’s comments are in “U.S. Informs Poland, USSR of ‘Serious Concern,’” *WP*, 14 December 1981, A1; and also in “U.S. Lacks Info, Acts Warily,” *WP*, 15 December, A1. His later description is in *Caveat*, 242. Perle’s remarks are in “Pentagon Aid Says U.S. Failed to Anticipate Polish Moves,” *WP*, 18 December 1981, A41. The views of other officials are described in “Polish Situation Sets Up Complex Choices for U.S.,” *WP*, 15 December 1981, A16; “Caught Off Guard,” *WP*, 15 December 1981, A23; and “High Officials Make No Secret They Were Caught Off Guard,” *NYT*, 18 December 1981, A17.

wrong. The idea underlying all of our scenarios was that martial law would be a gradual escalation.” (Which was certainly not what Kuklinski had been describing.) According to the press accounts in the immediate aftermath of the crackdown, virtually all other U.S. officials willing to comment on the issue said that the Reagan administration had been poised to confront a Soviet invasion, but had not developed plans on how to deal with martial law.⁸

What Was Missing?

From what is now known of the information available to the CIA at the time, it is clear that the failure was not in the intelligence “gathering,” but rather in the use—or nonuse—of the information that had been “gathered.” This is illustrated in the following chronological summary of information that had been obtained by CIA analysts during the two months preceding Kuklinski’s escape from Poland, and was thus available in the aggregate over a month before martial law was imposed. Because most of what Kuklinski reported, as well as evidence that may have been obtained from other sensitive human or technical sources, has not to date been declassified, the information in this chronology represents the *minimum* that was known at that time.

- 4 September: In a speech aired in the Polish media, Kania for the first time personally declared the regime’s willingness to impose a “state of emergency” (universally understood to mean some form of martial law) “to preserve the socialist system in Poland.” This statement was given the day before the scheduled opening of Solidarity’s first national congress. Earlier that same day the Soviets announced major exercises of their army and naval forces around the borders of Poland.
- 5–10 September: Solidarity held the first session of its national congress, and took steps that even some sympathetic Western observers described as going too far. The union challenged party dominance in management of the economy and in political control of the parliament, and—most dramatically—publicly urged workers of the other Soviet bloc countries (including the USSR) to follow Solidarity’s example in forming independent unions.

8. For the “senior State Department official,” see “U.S. Calls for Release of Walesa,” *WP*, 19 December 1981, A1. The comments from the former member of the interagency working group is in Rosenberg, *Haunted Land*, 206.

- 9 September: At the same time Solidarity was putting forward this program, the Chief of the Polish General Staff informed a small group of military officers who were preparing the martial law plans that the regime was moving toward implementing the plans. According to a source with direct access to this group, the Chief of Staff said the proclamations that would be distributed to the public when martial law was declared were being printed in the Soviet Union. He assured the officers that Moscow would provide military assistance if it were needed.
- 13 September: The Polish National Defense Committee, the body of military and political authorities responsible for major decisions on strategic military affairs, held a special meeting to address the implementation of martial law. Jaruzelski, in his dual capacities of head of the government (prime minister) and head of the military (minister of defense), serves as both chairman and vice chairman of this committee. The committee also includes the minister of the interior (a military officer appointed by Jaruzelski) and other high level military and civilian officials. A CIA source was told by one of the officers who attended the meeting that nearly all participants favored carrying out martial law.

Although the party first secretary is not a regular member of this committee, Kania attended the meeting, the first time he has done so. He reportedly was surprised by the tenor of the meeting. He did not question that a military crackdown would ultimately be required, according to what the source was told. He did argue, however, for first pursuing additional political means to constrain Solidarity's growing challenge, and said that after these were demonstrated to be unsuccessful, forceful repression could then be adopted.

After the meeting, working groups were formed to refine the martial law implementation measures. The basic plan is for martial law to begin at midnight on a night before a day when industrial plants will be closed (either Saturday or a Friday before a work-free Saturday). Roughly six hundred union officials and prominent dissidents are to be arrested in Warsaw alone; the arrests are to be carried out by the internal security forces while army units are deployed to seal off major cities.

- 15 September: The party Politburo met to discuss the martial law plan submitted by the military authorities. According to various accounts, including some reported in the press, the meeting continued until

very late at night, and the Politburo “seriously considered the plan” but decided against it. The next day the Politburo issued what was to date its strongest public condemnation of Solidarity, and said the party would “avail itself of all means required” to “defend socialism.”

- 17 and 20 September: The Council of Ministers, the highest executive body of the government, and which is also chaired by Jaruzelski, held two meetings, both of which were officially announced as “emergency meetings.” They were described as addressing “urgent matters,” and assessing “the readiness of organs of state administration.”
- 25 September: In what Western media described as a major victory for Solidarity and a rebuff to party authority, the Polish parliament, in the face of party opposition, passed new laws accepting the main thrust of the union’s demand that workers’ self-management councils be allowed to appoint and dismiss directors at plants and factories except those defined as “state enterprises.” The latter category was defined as including defense plants, and national functions such as communications, finance, and transportation.
- 27 September through 7 October: Solidarity held the second session of its national congress, concluding with the publication of the union’s “program” for changing economic and political procedures in Poland. It called for free elections at all government levels from towns and provinces up to and including parliament; establishment of a tribunal to punish those responsible for violent acts against strikers and protesters as far back as the 1956 workers suppression; guaranteed public control over radio and television; and the right of private citizens to own and control the content of publishing agencies.
- End of September through mid-October: The Polish regime has been reported to have been maneuvering to set up a special party Central Committee meeting on martial law, and dates are said to have finally been set for 16–18 October. Diverse sources, including a secret source inside the general staff, have said that a faction of top military officers and political officials were convinced that martial law was necessary, and that they have persuaded Jaruzelski to this view. Efforts reportedly are underway to remove Kania from the party leadership post because he is considered to be an obstacle to implementing martial law.

The refinement of martial law plans that began after the 13 September National Defense Committee meeting has been completed, and the printing of martial law proclamations in the USSR has been initiated.

- 12 October: The Solidarity News Bulletin for the period 26 September through 12 October reported that a party Politburo member told representatives of the party-fronted trade unions that special units of army and police had been formed to put down popular resistance. The Politburo member, well known for headstrong behavior, reportedly said the move was being envisaged for about two months hence, by which time the party hoped to have eroded Solidarity's public support. He said the operation would be overseen by a small "Council for National Salvation" headed by Jaruzelski.
- 16–18 October: The Central Committee held its special "plenum" meeting. Just before the meeting opened, the government announced that military conscripts due to be discharged at the end of the month (about 40,000 troops) would be kept on active duty until Christmas. The call-up of new conscripts, however, was to proceed on schedule. On the final day of the meeting, Kania resigned as head of the party and was replaced by Jaruzelski, who now held all the major power positions in the party, government, and military. The Central Committee published a resolution demanding that parliament pass an antistrike law, and that the government "invoke its constitutional prerogatives to guarantee peace in the country," an expression all observers agreed was a reference to its authority to employ force.
- 20–21 October: Police used force and tear gas, in what observers on the scene described as the worst outbreak of violence in the fourteen-month existence of Solidarity, to disperse a crowd protesting arrests of three Solidarity activists for "anti-Soviet propaganda"—distributing anti-Soviet leaflets. Three additional Solidarity members were arrested on the same charge, and the government issued a ban on public gatherings in the province where the arrests occurred. These actions took place on the eve of a Solidarity meeting that had already been scheduled—and publicly announced two weeks earlier—to decide on whether to proceed with a threatened strike in protest of the government's latest price increases.
- 22–23 October: Solidarity went ahead with its meeting (on the 22nd), and the following morning announced a one-hour national protest strike for the following week. Solidarity's announcement of a strike was immediately followed by a government announcement that 25,000 soldiers would be deployed in small groups in villages around the country, empowered "to counteract problems on the spot" in "establishing law and order," suppressing street demonstrations, assisting in food distribution, and securing open transportation lines.

- 28 October: Solidarity carried out its nationwide protest strike.
- 30 October: Jaruzelski asked the Polish parliament to issue a resolution calling for an end to strikes, and he also submitted a draft of a law that would grant the government authority to take “extraordinary means of action.” The parliament passed the resolution calling for strikes to cease, and declared that if this appeal was ignored, parliament would then take up the proposed law granting the government extraordinary powers.

This chronology is not a hindsight interpretation. It simply lists information now publicly known to have been in the CIA’s possession more than six weeks before martial law was imposed. It was available more than a week before Kuklinski arrived in the United States. With due allowance for “hindsight bias,” it is not going too far to say that this evidential chronology—by itself, with no accompanying analytic interpretation—presents its own case for the threat of martial law. It obviously leaves room for uncertainty, but it clearly points to the strong possibility. It shows repeating cycles of action and reaction, with escalating stages of confrontation provoking more preparations for a military crackdown.

One can only speculate as to what the results would have been if intelligence reporting on the unfolding events had been rigorously and continuously reviewed against such an aggregated evidential chronology. It is hard to believe, however, that it would not at a minimum have forced an examination of fundamental questions that were not scrutinized in the intelligence products at the time, and that this would have had a major impact on those products.

A prime example is the reporting on Polish leaders’ deliberations on martial law in mid-September. As noted above, the *National Intelligence Daily* on 24 September said military backing for martial law was only “apparent,” and that the hardening of attitudes was “possible” among “some” military officers. Inserted alongside the evidential chronology, however, this statement does not seem sustainable, unless accompanied by some explanation as to why the bulk of the evidence should be discounted. Kuklinski’s descriptions were not of “possible” support for imposition of martial law, but of support explicitly stated and of actions directed by top military and internal security officials. The fact that the highest officials in the Polish regime had held four meetings on martial law within one week, three of them chaired by Jaruzelski, was not simply “apparent,” and was itself an indication of support for martial law by at least part of the leadership. At the same

time that these meetings were being held, preparatory measures were underway that could not have been undertaken without military backing.

All of this took place immediately after the first session of Solidarity's congress. One obvious interpretation, therefore, would seem to be that the regime was reacting to what was widely perceived as a new order of magnitude in the political challenge that had been demonstrated by the union's congress. The State Department, even before any reporting had been received on the various martial law meetings, cabled the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw expressing concerns that the rising level of confrontation could result in a military crackdown. A special analysis prepared by some intelligence analysts at about the same time described a potential collision course between the union's rising challenge and the Polish regime's expressed determination to confront it with force if necessary. The U.S. Embassy, while rating the prospects for martial law at less than 50 percent, nonetheless judged Solidarity's actions in the first round of its congress as having brought the situation much closer to that threshold.

Taken at face value, the evidence at this point portrayed a Polish leadership still divided on the question of martial law, but with a growing contingent—including senior military and internal security officials—favoring it and moving ahead with at least contingency preparations. The evidence was well short of being conclusive, and the relative weight within the Polish leadership between those supporting and resisting martial law was a major unknown. At a minimum, however, the evidence pointed to a volatile situation in which ensuing developments could have a major impact on this division of views within the leadership, and thus determine whether martial law was enacted.

If this evidential framework had been laid out at the time, it would hopefully have prompted a context for a harder look at the potential impact of the events that followed. On 25 September, Solidarity won a face-to-face contest with the regime for parliamentary support on a fundamental issue of regime authority. At the end of its congress on 7 October, Solidarity put forward a program that left no room for pretending that what had begun as a national labor movement was not now a rival political force. The obvious question at this point would seem to be—had events since the end of the first round of the union congress escalated the challenge to the regime's authority and thus its survival? Is this how the regime was likely to see it? What was the potential effect on the balance of views within the Polish leadership regarding martial law?

Descriptions in the *NID* did acknowledge the prospects for future

confrontations over some of the provisions of Solidarity's program. The disseminated intelligence reports on these developments did not, however, explicitly address the potential impact that these developments might be having on the martial law support that had already been seen growing in reaction to Solidarity's earlier actions.

Again, the issue would have been subject to divergent opinions, but evidence of an escalation of the threat to party supremacy was at least strong enough to have been a central consideration in examining the implications of the Party Central Committee meeting that followed less than two weeks later. Prior to that meeting, the CIA had received information from a highly placed source that the military and internal security officials were planning to attack Kania's procrastination of martial law implementation. When the meeting took place, Kania was indeed replaced as head of the party, by the person who commanded both the military and internal security troops and who had—according to at least some CIA reports—been persuaded that martial law was necessary. The regime also took one of the steps that CIA analysts had themselves identified as probably essential to implementing martial law—postponing the discharge of military conscripts. And the party also issued a public resolution that even the intelligence analysts interpreted as a call for the government to employ whatever force was required to crack-down on the burgeoning political challenge.

With due allowance for alternative views, one interpretation—with which all the evidence was consistent—would have been that Kania's removal was specifically because of his resistance to using force, and that Jaruzelski was named successor specifically because of his power and willingness to do so. The only declassified intelligence document where this evidential line was examined in depth seems to have been the *Defense Intelligence Appraisal* of 4 November 1981, and this was precisely the conclusion reached by the DIA analysts.

Even if this were treated as only one alternative interpretation of the action-reaction pattern, it would have been one premise for examining the potential meaning of the events that immediately followed. During the three-day interval between the party's demand that parliament ban strikes and Solidarity's publicly scheduled meeting to decide whether to carry out a strike that had long been in the works, the regime launched violent attacks on Solidarity demonstrators. Solidarity's leadership not surprisingly responded a day later by announcing the strike would proceed, and it was carried out five days later. Two days after that, the parliament agreed to Jaruzelski's request for a resolution calling for an end to strikes, and promised to take

up his draft law granting the government “emergency powers” if the resolution did not bring an end to strikes.

This pattern would seem to provide a reason to at least address Solidarity’s charge that the violent assault on the eve of the union’s meeting to decide on a strike was a deliberate provocation to ensure the strike took place just as the regime was pressing parliament to ban strikes. It would also seem worth noting that Jaruzelski made this appeal to the parliament in his capacity as the head of the government that was responding to a resolution by the party that he now also headed.

Finally, the larger backdrop of evidence also might have alerted analysts to alternative and less sanguine interpretations of Jaruzelski’s promotion of “dialogue” in November. Viewing this move against the bigger picture would have brought out in sharp relief the contradiction between the two lines of conduct seen since the end of the party meeting in mid-October at which Jaruzelski replaced Kania. A search for explanations of this apparent contradiction might have resulted in at least some consideration that his dialogue was an effort to set the stage by portraying the government as seeking compromise and Solidarity as the militant solution-wrecker. This was a move that the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw had said would be necessary if martial law was to have a chance at succeeding, and CIA analysts had also said that Jaruzelski probably realized the importance of creating the right political atmosphere for imposing martial law. Again, nothing was conclusive, but the body of evidence indicated that compared to the interpretation of “a step forward for consultation and cooperation” described in the *NID*, Jaruzelski’s public appeals could just as easily fit a scheme to set the stage for martial law. One does not have to conclude what *is* the correct forecast in order to give a careful analysis of the alternatives, but the more ominous alternative does not get a fraction of as much attention in the daily intelligence reporting as the more optimistic interpretation.

This analytic tracking of the evidential chronology does not pretend to offer new insights into what was known, or some new, creative methodological approach for constructing assessments. It is simply a description of what, quite frankly, would seem to be a straightforward, uncomplicated linear reading of the information that was there. Hindsight effects are unavoidable, but in fact the *DIA Appraisal* of 4 November 81 presented a similar albeit less full layout of the evidence in reaching its conclusion that “Although factors indicate that full martial law may not be enforced immediately, events suggest that martial law may be imposed in Poland this winter.”

Speculation is admittedly one of the traps of hindsight. Nonetheless, had the evidential chronology—simply by itself as a descriptive summary—been given to senior policy officials in early November, it is hard to believe that at least some of those officials would not have drawn their own conclusions that the threat of martial law had significantly increased. At a minimum, it almost certainly would have prompted a request for an in-depth review. As Secretary Haig's memoranda to the President on 13 November and 1 December clearly demonstrate, there were already concerns over the “fragile” state of the liberalization movement in Poland and the danger of “reimposition of an inflexible Soviet-style communist dictatorship.”

Indeed, if there had been standing procedures for maintaining such a chronological summary of the evidence and subjecting disseminated analysis to a review against this evidential line-up, it is hard to believe that the intelligence agencies themselves could have avoided initiating an in-depth, all-source assessment. And if this had been done, with the evidence available at the beginning of November, the warning sirens would almost certainly have gone off.

All this is not intended to support arguments of who was right and who was wrong. Rather, it is intended to demonstrate *one* of the fundamental missing elements of the professional analytic practice—the failure to produce a comprehensive presentation of the evidence and to demonstrate the derivation of analytic conclusions on the basis of this evidence. This is not just a matter of providing intelligence products to policy officials. The first beneficiaries of “externalizing”⁹ evidence in this way—setting it down on paper—are the analysts themselves. One of the purposes of such practices is to highlight the tough questions that too often get passed over in day-to-day reporting, and to expose the cases for alternatives that have not been given prominence. The first task in putting together a puzzle is putting all the pieces on the table. In the case of intelligence, pieces will always be missing, but that makes it all the more necessary to lay out what is available. Looking at one piece alongside others helps push up questions that sometimes slip by.

Moreover, following this practice can also highlight cases in which important questions have already slipped by. In the pressures of the day-to-day intelligence production, some events have to be interpreted and reported before some of the additional pieces of the puzzle picture are received or

9. Regarding the origins and use of the term “externalizing” as an analytic tool, see Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, 27, and Chapter 7.

absorbed. This may have been a factor, for example, in the daily reporting on events in mid-September. By the end of October or early November, however, all the pieces described in the above chronology had been received and could have been laid out as the basis for a periodic in-depth assessment. Again, this is illustrated by the *DIA Appraisal* in early November.

There have been myriad studies proposing various methodologies and modeling techniques for “fixing” intelligence analysis. But the first essential step is the relatively simple straightforward process of laying out the evidence piece by piece. There needs to be a triggering device to break loose the chain of a fixed position, setting off what might be called the “oops alarm.”

No such comprehensive evidential chronology was disseminated and no integrated analytic assessment of such was produced on the Polish situation in the months leading up to martial law. There was no established procedure at the time requiring such overview summations to be prepared. Creation of such products depended on someone taking the initiative, and in this case no one did. Why no one did so is and doubtless will continue to be a matter of some disagreement.

Why Was It Missing?

A commonly held perception is that overprotection of the Kuklinski reporting caused it to be restricted to the point that it was “rendered useless.”¹⁰ It is certainly true that there were rigorous controls on the access to his reporting, and on how it could be characterized in any disseminated intelligence products, and on who could be given even these carefully crafted products. Even tighter controls were placed on distribution of his information after he reported in mid-September that he was in serious jeopardy, and this was certainly justified.

This did not, however, prevent analysts cleared for Kuklinski’s reports from producing the kind of integrated evidential chronology described above. Nor was there anything to prevent them from employing it for an in-depth, all-source integrated assessment for the key senior officials authorized to receive the information. According to former Deputy Director of

10. Rosenberg, *Haunted Land*, 205–7; Dobbs, *Down With Big Brother*, 73. The same perceptions were described to this author by prominent scholars at a seminar held by the Davis Center for Russian Studies at Harvard University in the winter of 1997.

Central Intelligence Bobby Inman, there were about twenty top officials, outside the intelligence agencies, who received Kuklinski's reporting. These included the President, Vice President, Secretaries of State and Defense, National Security Advisor, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Analysts who were covering the situation at the time have themselves affirmed that key information from Kuklinski, including the information at least through mid-October contained in the chronology above, was in fact provided to the top U.S. policy officials.

It was, however, mainly parsed out in individual reports as it became available, rather than as part of integrated summation of the larger all-source evidence base. The detailed descriptions of the martial law preparations provided by Kuklinski were treated as a separate matter of military contingency measures, rather than presented in the context of evidence from all sources on the unfolding political dynamics.¹¹

Moreover, there was nothing to prevent the analysts from drawing on their *knowledge* of Kuklinski's reports in order to interpret evidence from other sources, including open sources. For example, in the case of the Politburo discussion of martial law in mid-September, which was also described in the press, there was no restriction on using *all* the information from the preceding weeks as a basis for assessing the implications of the meeting. The same was true for the assessments of the potential implications of the leadership change in mid-October.

The detail and explicitness with which Kuklinski's information could be presented in describing the basis for intelligence judgments depended on the channel through which the judgments were presented. For the President and top officials, the evidence could be specifically described. It could not be specifically used in vehicles such as the *NID*, which was sent to individuals not authorized for Kuklinski's original reporting, but that would be no justification for offering a judgment in the *NID* that did not take into account the total body of evidence available to the analysts. And in fact the special analysis in the *NID* of 18 September, assessing the situation

11. Kuklinski's reporting is not explicitly identified in any of the declassified intelligence reports written prior to imposition of martial law, but examples of the general tendency to portray actions that clearly raised readiness for martial law as purely contingency steps can be seen in the declassified *NID* reports "Poland: Differences Over Martial Law," 24 September; "Poland: Political Maneuvering," 19 October; "Poland: New Role for the Military," 24 October; "Poland: Deployment of Troops," 26 October; "Poland: Tough Government Stance," 27 October; "Poland: Solidarity's Strike," 28 October; and "Poland: Continuing the Dialogue," 29 October 1981.

in the aftermath of Solidarity's first national congress session, included a cleared statement summarizing the basic substance of what had appeared in earlier Kuklinski reporting: "The Polish regime has drawn up a detailed plan of military measures, including curfews, arrests, shows of force, total military control of the country, and arrest of Solidarity leaders." This was reported in the *NID* before any of the events of Solidarity's second session of congress, the extension of active duty for army conscripts, the change in party leadership, and Kuklinski's escape from Poland.

Critics of the CIA's performance have made much of the fact that Kuklinski was in the United States a month before martial law was implemented. The natural question is—since at this point his physical jeopardy had been relieved, and the Poles and Soviets knew that the United States had the details of the martial law preparations, why was no effort made to publicly expose the Polish scheme? This certainly is a legitimate question.

At a minimum, the operational handlers of Kuklinski's escape are vulnerable to criticism for failing to spotlight the potential implications of the escape itself within the larger political context. His flight from Poland did not take place in a vacuum. And he had already warned the CIA two months earlier that the Polish intelligence service knew the United States had been informed of the martial law plans, including the code name for the plan. There could have been no question by the time Kuklinski arrived in the United States that the Polish leaders knew he was gone, and had concluded he was the source of the U.S. knowledge of the secret martial law plans. They may have been uncertain as to how much Kuklinski knew of their latest decisions, although quick internal damage assessment would have been done and all officers who had talked to him in recent weeks would doubtless have been interrogated. Regardless of whether this revealed that he had been explicitly told just before his escape that the decision to implement the plan had been made, the Poles would almost certainly have felt compelled to assume the worst.

With secrecy concerns prevailing, no one seems to have called attention to the potential that the *fact* that the escape had taken place could itself have policy implications, since Polish leaders would be watching and interpreting U.S. reactions. Kuklinski was after all a general staff officer who was intimately involved in the plans for the military crackdown that the United States had been admonishing against.

Some officers involved in the meetings with Kuklinski after he arrived in the United States have said that part of the problem was the absence, prior to his escape, of any alarm soundings, or notes of urgency from intelligence

analysts or policy officials on the threat of martial law. Thus no priority was assigned to it in the ranking of issues to be addressed in his debriefing sessions. Subjects were taken up with Kuklinski in accordance with standing priority rankings—mainly military. And within the standing military priorities, martial law fell below such things as nuclear plans and posture. Only a very small group of analysts was informed of his escape and took part in debriefing him. The same lack of warning that allowed the policy officials to be caught off guard also impeded the CIA's use of its own asset.

This may explain why the critical information Kuklinski received just before his escape, that the decision to go ahead with martial law had been made, did not get the high priority, flagged delivery to policy officials that it merited. The *NID* did carry a statement that “A reliable source has reported that by late October the Polish authorities had made their decision to impose martial law and had coordinated their plan with the Soviets.” But no one seems able to explain exactly why this did not appear in the *NID* until a week *after* martial law was imposed, rather than as a lead point *before* martial law was carried out, when the source was safely in the United States.¹²

A summary assessment of the martial law plan, incorporating the additional details provided by Kuklinski after he arrived in the United States, was eventually provided to senior policy officials through special, restricted channels about a week before martial law was launched. This was about the same time that the Polish regime was publicizing the tapes of Solidarity’s meeting at Radom. The report said that the preparations for a military crackdown had been for all practical purposes completed, and that given this level of preparation it would be difficult at best for intelligence to provide “tactical warning” of the implementation of the plans. But all this was still treated as a description of “military contingency moves.”¹³ It was not integrated with an assessment of the pattern of political developments.

Notwithstanding the legitimate criticisms about the handling of Kuklinski’s debriefing after he arrived in the United States, it is also a fact that all of the information listed in the chronology above was in the hands of the analysts before Kuklinski escaped. The handling of Kuklinski by the CIA does not excuse the failure to produce the integrated assessment of the information outlined in that chronology. And had such an assessment been prepared, it might well have provoked a more proactive effort to seek whatever

12. “USSR-Poland: Martial Law and Soviet Contingency Plans,” decl. *NID*, 19 December 1981.

13. This is based on the author’s knowledge.

else Kuklinski had to offer on the martial law prospects, other than simply details of the contingency plans.

Some analysts have cited the delivery of the earlier reporting from Kuklinski through special channels to top policy officials (e.g., the reports in September and October), and the delivery in early December of a description of the martial law “contingency” preparations, as demonstrating that the Administration was indeed warned about martial law. One problem with this argument is that it contradicts the same analysts’ contention that the reason a more forceful warning was not given was the sequestering of Kuklinski’s information.

On a more fundamental level, this also illustrates what could be called the “current intelligence trap.” Analysts report each piece of incoming intelligence, and sometimes with not-insignificant time gaps. For the analyst working full time on a particular issue, the day-to-day reporting in the current intelligence products, even though sometimes with notable time gaps, is placed in a single mental file, at the front of the list of priorities. The policy official on the other hand, and most especially the most senior officials, have a steady, daily stream involving a wide range of complex issues, many requiring immediate action.

What the analysts perceive as obvious in current intelligence reporting often is not so to the recipients. The analysts are at risk of being lulled into a false sense of what has been communicated, and for the readers it seems like a pebble at a time. To rebut charges that intelligence “failed to warn,” analysts can virtually always find disseminated reports of information that in hindsight can be seen as indications of what occurred. Policy officials will respond by pointing out that the information was dealt out piecemeal and not in a way that conveyed warning or highlighted the more ominous interpretations of the information in question.

Several analysts who were involved in covering the Polish crisis have observed that, looking back, the ongoing, almost daily reporting on every aspect of Polish politics, threatening or encouraging, for a year and a half tended to have this effect. Similar findings showed up in reviews of other cases in which policy officials have said they were caught unprepared. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, for example, a paper outlining the military preparations that had taken place three weeks before the invasion was offered to support claims that there was no reason to have been surprised.¹⁴ The response was that no intelligence products said the invasion was likely.

14. The author participated in the drafting of this military force deployment report.

In the end, one cannot avoid facing up to the fact that the central factor impeding the kind of intelligence product that could have made a difference was the skepticism on the part of both intelligence analysts and policy officials on the willingness and ability of the Polish regime to impose martial law. Not surprisingly, recollections of what was known and said and read have evolved in the two decades since the events took place. One can, however, read the day-to-day coverage delivered in the *NID*, and draw one's own conclusion. The debate that was underway in the CIA's Operation Center on the night that martial law was launched illustrates the extent to which this was still a factor late in the game. There can always be found a sentence here or a paragraph there that describe preparations for use of force, but even these are formulated as "preparations in case . . ." Without the benefit of hindsight, there is nothing in the tenor of the daily intelligence reporting to convey a sense of a potential for the sudden crackdown that occurred.

It should also be pointed out that this was not a matter of being smart or of expertise. The analysts were smart, and they were experts. Their perspectives on the likelihood of Polish leaders' use of force were the same as experts in the policy community and on the Embassy staff in Warsaw. Ambassador Meehan has said that on the same day he met with Jaruzelski in late November 1981, he had been told by Polish Archbishop Glemp that there was "a good chance of martial law." Meehan has said he reported this to Washington, but "without giving it particular weight."¹⁵ Records from Polish and Soviet archives show that the analysts' perspectives were to varying degrees shared at various times by some of the participants in Warsaw and Moscow.

It also was not a matter of failure to "consider" alternative scenarios. The scenario of martial law was raised early in the game and was on the table throughout the developments. The problem was that this scenario was judged from the beginning as not likely, and the evidence flow was examined in terms only of what was *a priori* considered likely. Intelligence assessments in mid-1981 began portraying the outlook as a choice between Soviet invasion and liberalization in Poland. The U.S. Embassy in Warsaw shared this view. As Secretary Haig has said, the United States had plenty of information on what the Polish regime was preparing to do, but did not believe they would do it.

15. Meehan, "Reflections on the Polish Crisis," *CWIHP* 11 (winter 1998): 45.

A vivid example of a similar pattern is what former Secretary of State Kissinger has unequivocally labeled an “intelligence failure” in the surprise invasion of Israel by Syria and Egypt in October 1973. In that case, it was not only the U.S. intelligence analysts who did not think the two Arab states would attack, despite the fact that the buildup of their forces was blatantly visible. Israeli officials repeatedly assured Washington that they also were sure it would not happen.¹⁶

The same pattern was demonstrated in the case of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, and the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. In every case the “alternative scenario” did not have to be constructed—it was manifest. But it was considered a dumb move and analysts and policy officials alike concluded that the governments in question would not do something dumb. When some analysts did try to make the case for the dumb move, they were also categorized as dumb. Yet another example is the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, when a *NIE* gave all the logical arguments as to why the Soviets would *not* deploy offensive missiles in Cuba.¹⁷

The analytic pitfalls demonstrated in the intelligence interpretations have been routinely encountered in other fields of analysis. Many studies have been done on this pattern of analytic failure, with many labels attached—“mindset,” “cognitive bias,” and “mirror imaging” being just a few examples. As was described in the first part of this study and was illustrated repeatedly in subsequent intelligence reporting, the mind forms a model, and once that is done new information is processed within the model rather than used to examine the components of the model. And the dominant model is established to conform to the viewer’s assessment of what “dumb” thing will not be done.

The purpose of intelligence analysis is not just reporting, nor is it crystal ball gazing and “predicting” the future. Indeed, the premium attached to “predictions” and “bottom lines” contributes to the slide into the mindset trap. As is now known from disclosures of the internal decision making

16. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), 450–67.

17. On both Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia, the author participated in the military assessments at the time, and his monograph on Afghanistan is soon to be published by the CIA’s Center for the Study of Intelligence. On the Cuban missile crisis, an overall treatment is in Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); and the passage from the *NIE* is quoted in Jerrold L. Schecter and Peter S. Derbrian, *The Spy Who Saved the World: How a Soviet Colonel Changed the Course of the Cold War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1992), 330.

on most of the major events usually cited as past intelligence failures, intelligence analysts and political officials in Washington were making predictions of what the other players would or would not do when the players themselves were uncertain. As is shown in the next chapter, the martial law operation in Poland was a work in progress virtually up to the last minute. The proclivity to become the prisoner of predictions is unfortunately encouraged to a large extent by the demands of policy officials for “bottom line answers” on future prospects.

The mission of intelligence is not setting odds on future events. The job is to collect information and provide that information and the analysis of it to policy makers to assist their decisions on whether and when to act and what actions to take. The demand for predictions probably is unavoidable. But this has to be addressed in terms of the factors that are shaping the events and will determine the outcomes. It needs to include the evidence showing how those factors affect the dynamics of the situation, the status of those factors at various stages in the evolving situation, the path in which they are moving, and the forces that could shape and steer them in the future. The policy officials are faced with decisions on whether and how to try to affect those factors to shape an outcome.

The fact that the mindset trap has continued to be repeated after so many studies and models and methodologies have been offered up to correct it suggests that the proposed remedies really address the symptoms and not the infection. All of these approaches have value and can contribute significantly to analytic performance. But the first barrier to cross is the explicit acknowledgment that the problem is there, and that it is systemic to the human cognitive process. The patient has to acknowledge that it needs medicine specifically designed to compensate for an addiction that will otherwise continue to impede performance. The analysts themselves and the intelligence managers need to be the people demanding the processes, as a requirement for their own professional competency. Otherwise the reaction is simply a case of medicine being forced on a reluctant patient, who when given the opportunity will evade what is viewed as an unnecessary burdensome treatment. This is why so many efforts at treatment in the past have not been sustained, and lapses have continued to occur.

Once the conclusion is reached that mandatory procedures are needed, their design and application can be made in accordance with the nature of the analytic mission and conditions of the units involved. The procedures need not involve complicated modeling and methodologies, which in fact are easier to employ in the abstract than in practice, especially in the dynamic

situations in which the analysts usually find themselves. Advanced weaponry is invaluable in the right circumstances, but there is also the need for weapons that can be managed, maintained, and effectively employed in the trenches of ongoing intelligence coverage of unfolding situations.

An evidential record along the lines illustrated above would in any event be a required part of virtually any modeling methodology, and by itself provides a significant analytic check. It is not time costly or distractive and can be maintained as a rolling record. The critical requirement is that an updated segment of this rolling record, delineated by time of coverage (e.g., the example above covered two months) or length of presentation (e.g., two to three pages), be provided periodically (e.g., monthly, biweekly) to the intelligence officers involved in coordinating and reviewing the disseminated analytic products. It needs to become, in effect, the instrument for a self-imposed test process.

And much as analysts may hate the thought of seeming to be encouraging their customers to do analysis of their own, these evidential summaries, within the bounds of source protection, should be delivered to key intelligence recipients. Intelligence analysts are providing analytic judgments and the evidential basis needs to be transparently shared.

This should be accompanied by a short listing of what are assessed to be the handful of key factors that are driving events and that are likely to shape the outcome. (Attached at the beginning or at the end, or presented in a parallel column) This also is not a complicated, time-consuming burden to the ongoing process, and in fact is usually done in some form on its own. In covering the Polish situation, for example, the analysts created what was in effect a list of these driving factors early in the process, in mid-1980, and it remained the basic analytic framework, even though not for the most part explicitly described as such, right up to the endgame. The main elements included:

- The threat to party supremacy: This was listed in the early assessments in the summer and fall of 1980 and again in the Embassy cable of September 1981. Bearing directly on this factor were Solidarity's actions at its national congress, and the reactions indicated by the martial law meetings and party leadership change that followed.
- The willingness of the Polish leaders to resort to force: This was central to all calculations of the prospect for martial law from the first analytic products in August 1980. Directly bearing on this was the reporting by Kuklinski on the secret meetings in September and on

the evolving positions of Jaruzelski and his military staff, and the circumstances of the party leadership change in mid-October.

- The reliability of the rank and file of the military forces: This also was identified right at the outset and was central to all intelligence judgments over the next year and a half. Significantly relevant to this factor was the extension of conscript from mid-October to Christmas. Early analysis of the potential for martial law had pointed out that if it were attempted, some steps would have to be taken to deal with the problem of reactions of newly conscripted troops who had only recently been part of or directly exposed to the burgeoning civil opposition.
- The risk of widespread political backlash in the population at large: Early in the game, and reaffirmed in the Embassy assessment, the judgment was made that if martial law was to have a chance of success, efforts would first have to be made to undermine Solidarity's image. The actions with the Polish parliament were manifestly related to this factor, and this also provided one potential interpretation of Jaruzelski's "Front of National Salvation."
- The threat of Soviet military intervention: As was amply demonstrated in the intelligence products, for much of the crisis this was the focus of all forecasts. As the chronology of evidence shows, however, physical evidence of Soviet military preparations of any sort was notably absent at the very time that Solidarity's threat to Polish party supremacy was reaching a new order of magnitude.

If such relatively simply devices for framing the evidence had been rigorously enforced for intelligence production in 1980–81, the products dealing with the events in Poland almost certainly would have communicated the serious risk of martial law. While one can never predict policy reactions, some significant effort by the Reagan Administration was certainly likely. And while scholars will doubtless continue to disagree on the issue, the evidence now available indicates there was at least a good chance that events in Poland would have taken a significantly different course.

Absent such rules of professional practice, the human failings of mind-set, bureaucratic turf guarding, inadequate communication, and simple distraction were free to wreck their damage. No one comes off blameless.

Chapter 14: Would It Have Made a Difference?

Jaruzelski's claim that he imposed martial law as a lesser evil to pre-empt an inevitable Soviet military intervention has had fairly widespread acceptance, as illustrated by the comments of U.S. policy officials at the time and by much of the literature since.¹ This interpretation is a logical offspring of the strongly held conviction of both U.S. intelligence analysts and policy officials, before martial law was imposed, that the Poles would not impose martial law, or would do so only if forced by the Soviets. Indeed, many statements and writings from Western officials and analysts offering this explanation were given public resonance well before Jaruzelski openly made such claims. Up until the time the Soviet Union broke up in late 1991, he staunchly denied, at least in public, that the USSR intended to invade Poland. His public offerings of the "lesser evil" argument have occurred since then. It has been noted that this may have reflected his continuing deference to the Soviets,² and it is also worth noting that his change in position occurred at a time when it clearly became in his interest to change his position.

While the evidence leaves no doubt that the Soviets had worked out detailed plans for deployment of military forces into Poland in a crackdown on Solidarity, all the information available so far shows that the military intervention that was planned—with Polish knowledge—was to be a collaborative operation with the Polish regime. It called for forces from the USSR and other Warsaw Pact states to enter Poland under a joint exercise cover that was to have been supported by the Polish regime. Once in Poland, these forces were to provide backup for martial law that would be imposed mainly by the Polish internal security forces and Polish army. The

1. In addition to the comments of U.S. officials cited above, Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 287ff., discusses the extent to which this had gained "surprisingly wide acceptance in Western foreign policy establishments." Rosenberg, *Haunted Land*, 208, also refers to it as the common view.

2. See for example Kramer, "New Evidence on the Polish Crisis 1980–81," *CWIHP* 11, note 3.

Soviet and other “fraternal” Warsaw Pact forces were to serve partly as intimidation to resistance and if necessary to substitute for Polish army forces whose reliability and willingness to impose force on their own populace was suspect.

This was the plan prescribed in the scenario for the “maneuvers” prepared for December 1980 and subsequently put off. It was also the plan for the operations being organized in the spring of 1981 under the cover of the *Soyuz '81* exercise. This is also the plan described in documents and statements by former Soviet and other Warsaw Pact military officers in recent years. It is consistent with the size of the forces whose mobilization was set out in the Suslov commission directive back at the beginning of the crisis in August 1980.

The evidence also makes a strong case that through mid-1981 the Soviets were prepared to carry out this plan, and probably were expecting to do so in the spring of 1981, under the cover of the *Soyuz '81* joint Warsaw Pact exercise being conducted on Polish territory. They were prevented from doing so then by the adamant opposition of Kania and Jaruzelski, opposition that left Moscow with the alternative of imposing a military invasion or accepting at least a temporary postponement while continuing to apply pressure on the Poles to impose their own military crackdown. The Soviets opted for the latter course.

The U.S. intelligence on Soviet military forces shows that—shrill invasion warnings notwithstanding—at no time did Moscow mobilize and prepare forces commensurate with an invasion to be carried out in opposition to the Polish regime, in the face of potential armed resistance of uncertain dimensions. Experts can challenge the CIA's estimate that at least thirty or more divisions would have been prepared for such an operation, but it would be hard to make the case that there would not have been more than just three to four Soviet divisions mobilized in the western USSR. Yet that was the most that intelligence showed to have been readied there even at the high points of U.S. warnings in December 1980 and April 1981. Even the additional five to seven divisions for which contingency mobilization measures were taken were not brought to operational readiness. And contrary to some allegations that have circulated since then, no preparation of a Soviet military intervention force—even of the relatively small size called for in the collaborative scenario—took place in the weeks prior to imposition of martial law by the Poles. Indeed, the absence of any significant readying of even a backup Soviet intervention force in the weeks preceding imposition of martial law was one of the reasons the United States was so complacent.

Moscow clearly sought to utilize the specter of an invasion for political leverage. Even so, most of the evidence shows this was aimed more at the opposition in Poland and at Western perceptions than at the Polish leaders who were being pressed to carry out the martial crackdown. One document from the Soviet archives, for example, asserts that the main reason Solidarity had not yet exploited the weakness of the Polish regime to “take de facto power into its own hands” was “primarily because of its fear that Soviet troops would be introduced.” This document was produced by the Suslov Commission on 16 April 1981, right after Moscow failed to get Jaruzelski and Kania to exploit the *Soyuz '81* exercises to impose a military crackdown. In recommending measures for the future, the Suslov Commission urged that “as a deterrent to counterrevolution, maximally exploit the fears of *internal reactionaries and international imperialism* that the Soviet Union might send in its troops.”³ [Emphasis added.]

There is ample evidence that the Polish leaders themselves were fully aware that the Soviets were in fact extremely reluctant to carry out a full fledged military invasion, and were instead counting on being able to coerce the Poles into imposing the needed military crackdown. Jaruzelski participated in the planning for the collaborative introduction of backup forces as far back as December 1980, and the Polish General Staff was fully involved in the spring 1981 exercise scenario rehearsing the movement of “fraternal forces” into Poland under the cover of a joint exercise. The many brow-beating sessions by the Soviet leadership usually involved threats of retaliation against irresolute Polish leaders—and implied efforts at their replacement—rather than threats of invasion. According to East German records, Soviet Marshal Kulikov explicitly emphasized to Jaruzelski in April 1981 that Moscow did not want to be seen intervening unilaterally, and insisted that the Poles had to make the first effort, after which the Soviets could portray themselves as providing assistance. Jaruzelski’s face-down of Moscow’s pressures to implement martial law in April 1981 is itself an indication that he understood the leverage he derived in confronting the Soviets with the alternative of having to conduct an invasion on their own.

3. “Extract from CPSU CC Protocol No. 7, 23 April 1981,” with attached Politburo [Suslov] Commission report “On the Development of the Situation in Poland and Certain Steps on Our Part,” *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*. A subsequent KGB document said the threat of military intervention by Warsaw Pact members must be “a constant factor in the minds of all Polish political forces.” It is not clear whether this was the KGB’s description of the same Suslov Commission recommendation described above or a later version by the commission. See Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books/Perseus Group, 1999), 524.

There is also increasing evidence that while the Polish leaders clearly dreaded the potential violence and repercussions of a Soviet military intervention, they were still counting on being able to call on Soviet backup forces as a last resort if their own military suppression went awry. A Polish archival document on martial law plans dated 25 November 1981, less than three weeks before martial law, posits as a worst-case scenario a situation of widespread violence, and concludes with the statement “The assistance of Warsaw Pact forces is not ruled out.”⁴ Jaruzelski has sought to dismiss the relevance of this document on the grounds that it was a “draft” from a file containing “preliminary materials” and was not signed⁵ (which is probably why it survived in the records).

The CIA had received reports in September 1981, when the momentum for martial law was increasing, that Polish General Staff officers had pressed General Swicki on whether Poland could count on help from the Soviets if necessary. Swicki reportedly had assured them the help would be there. Other reports received by the CIA described the martial law plans presented to the Polish political leaders by the General Staff as not excluding the need to request assistance from the USSR and other Warsaw Pact members. These reports said it was for this reason that the Chief of the Polish General Staff specifically called for the martial law plans to be coordinated with the Soviets and other potential Warsaw Pact participants.⁶

A sizable body of evidence indicates that on the eve of launching martial law, Polish leaders were seeking explicit assurances that they could count on military assistance from Moscow if the opposition to martial law proved to be more than they could handle. This information is mainly from former Soviet officials and documents from such officials, who assert that these Polish requests for such assistance were rebuffed, and that the Poles were told they had no basis to expect such aid. One source is a September 1992 article by Soviet General Anatolii Gribkov, who at the time of the Polish crisis was deputy to Warsaw Pact Commander-in-Chief Marshal Kulikov. Subsequent statements by Mikhail Gorbachev, who was at the time a member of the Soviet Politburo, independently corroborate much of Gribkov’s account, and similar descriptions have been aired by the former chief KGB officer in Warsaw. Records of Soviet Politburo meetings also refer to the

4. Paweł Machewicz, “The Assistance of Warsaw Pact Forces is Not Ruled Out,” *CWIHP* 11, 40–42. The document was released in 1997 by the Polish Ministry of the Interior.

5. Wojciech Jaruzelski, “Commentary,” *CWIHP* 11, 32–39.

6. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 234. Gates does not specify whether this was from Kuklinski.

Poles' expectations of Soviet military assistance. The notebook of Marshal Kulikov's personal adjutant describes several exchanges between Polish and Soviet leaders and military officers shortly before martial law was launched in which the Poles are seeking assurances of Soviet military backup.⁷

Jaruzelski has of course virulently denied this charge, and has sought to rebut each piece of evidence that has been cited in support of it.⁸ He faces a tough sell, because of the number and diversity of the sources and the consistency of the their information.

Adding to his burden is new evidence publicly disclosed at the end of 1999, after Jaruzelski had already published his latest rebuttal. Copies of KGB documents smuggled out of Russia by a former KGB archivist, Vasili Mitrokhin, include a report from the KGB station in Warsaw describing a meeting Jaruzelski had with Marshal Kulikov on the evening of 8 December. According to this report, Jaruzelski was demonstrably concerned over the prospects that the martial law effort might break down, and said that it might be necessary to appeal for assistance from the USSR and other Warsaw Pact forces, although he asked that the East German forces not be included. Kulikov responded, "I can assure you that you have no need for concern on that score. The question of assisting you in the event that your own resources become exhausted is being addressed at the general staff level."⁹

This KGB report fits with and adds some insight to the record of a Soviet Politburo meeting held two days later, on 10 December. The record of this meeting has been available for several years, and has been a somewhat controversial part of the body of evidence used to support the allegation that Jaruzelski was in fact seeking guarantees of Soviet military backing if his own forces failed. According to this record, the CPSU secretary for inter-party relations in the Warsaw Pact (K. V. Rusakov), referring to meetings that took place in Poland "the day before yesterday" (which would match the 8 December date given in the KGB message), claimed that Jaruzelski had said that "if the Polish forces are unable to cope with the resistance put up by Solidarity, the Polish comrades hope to receive assistance from the other countries, up to and including the introduction of armed forces on the territory of Poland." Rusakov said that in expressing this hope, Jaruzelski has been "citing remarks by Comrade Kulikov, who supposedly

7. Kramer, "Jaruzelski, the Soviet Union and the Imposition of Martial Law in Poland: New Light on the Mystery of December 1981," *CWIHP* 11, 5–31.

8. Jaruzelski, "Commentary," *CWIHP* 11, 32–39.

9. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Sword and Shield*, 529–30.

said that the USSR and other socialist countries would indeed give assistance to Poland with their armed forces.”¹⁰

Rusakov was then joined by others at this meeting—Andropov and Ustinov in particular—in what many readers of the transcript have justifiably interpreted as tailored-for-the-record statements asserting that Kulikov did not say this, and that the USSR had no intention of inserting forces into Poland.¹¹ At one point in this discussion, however, Andropov commented, “If Comrade Kulikov actually did speak about the introduction of troops, then I believe he did this incorrectly.”

This has been interpreted as suggesting that Kulikov had indeed given some statement about Moscow’s willingness to commit military assistance, and that Andropov was aware of it and thus felt compelled to record that any such statement was not authorized by the Politburo.¹² The KGB report of the discussion between Jaruzelski and Kulikov on 8 December supports this interpretation. As KGB head, Andropov would have received this report, and its description of Kulikov’s statement may well have been more explicit than what was communicated through other channels. At the time of this Politburo meeting Andropov had also received a report from his chief point of contact on the Polish Politburo, Milsewski, describing Jaruzelski’s complaints that Moscow was backing down on its commitment “to provide all the assistance and support needed.”¹³

This Politburo meeting also was not the first time this issue was recorded. The record of a meeting over a month earlier, on 29 October, also includes a statement by Andropov that “the Polish leaders are talking about military assistance from the fraternal countries. However, we need to adhere firmly to our line—that our troops will not be sent to Poland.”¹⁴

While the new evidence reinforces the case that Jaruzelski was indeed looking for a Soviet guarantee of military backup, it also reinforces the phoniness of Soviet protestations that the Poles had no basis to expect it. All the Soviet declarations for the records of their official meetings at the end of 1981 cannot erase their record throughout most of the previous twelve to fifteen months.

10. Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 21. An earlier translation by Kramer that appeared in *CWIHP* 5 (spring 1995), used the term “speech by” rather than “remarks by” Kulikov.

11. See, for example, Ambassador Meehan’s comments in “Reflections on the Polish Crisis,” *CWIHP* 11, 44.

12. See Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, translator’s note 282.

13. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield*, 530.

14. Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis*, document 20.

None of this rules out the possibility that ultimately, faced with a liberalization in Poland and—at a minimum—uncertainty regarding Poland's place in the Warsaw Pact military alliance, the Soviets might have resorted to an invasion. But it does indicate that at the time the Poles instituted martial law this was more a matter of conjectural conviction than manifest evidence. Jaruzelski himself has framed it somewhat more in this light in one of his latest public renditions of his defense, saying, "The Russians truly did not want to undertake an intervention, but the circumstances would have made its imposition inevitable."¹⁵

It is plausible and indeed likely that Soviet military planners did at least examine the requirements and options for a unilateral military intervention, if only to be prepared to respond to queries or proposals from the political leadership. As has also been pointed out, the Soviets had the military might to overcome the Polish resistance. Moscow in the end could probably have won the war.¹⁶

But at what cost? Whether Moscow by then—the end of 1981 and into 1982—was willing to pay the price of such a war is uncertain at best. Poland was a much larger military challenge than Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968. The USSR was already suffering significant economic strains, and while globalization had not yet become the norm, Moscow's capacity in the 1980s to bear the political and economic costs of the Western—not just U.S.—reaction to an invasion in East Europe was far less than in the earlier cold war years. Some Western economic penalties had already been imposed in reaction to the invasion of Afghanistan, and the conflict there was escalating and so were its costs, political as well as material. The Soviets could ill afford to take on the new costs that would come with a military occupation of Poland, the almost certain imposition of far more stringent Western economic penalties and political isolation than imposed after the move into Afghanistan, and the burden of replacing at least some Western economic support to Poland itself.

The Soviets also had every reason to be concerned, based on their experience in December 1980 and April 1981, that if an invasion force were to be readied near Poland, the United States would ensure that the whole

15. "L'état de siège était un moindre mal. . . . Les Russes ne souhaitaient pas vraiment se livrer une intervention, mais les circonstances pouvaient la rendre inévitable," in "Le Mur est d'abord tombé en Pologne [The Wall First Fell (or Began Its Fall) in Poland]" *Le Figaro*, 7 November 1999, 4. The interview was part of extensive European media coverage of the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was treated as the "fall of the Iron Curtain," in effect, a date for defining the end of the cold war.

16. See, for example, Garton Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 296.

world heard about it well before the assault could be launched. This would add uncertainties to the military calculus for Soviet planners, and create a prospect of even higher costs, including a more organized backlash from other Western governments. Which was precisely the purpose of the public and diplomat offensive launched, albeit relatively late in the game, by the Carter administration in December 1980.

Nothing in that U.S. effort had hinted at some kind of military assistance. No one would have assumed that a Western public and diplomatic offensive would by itself be a decisive deterrent. But for Moscow, the prospect of carrying out its planned invasion of a state whose populace had been fully warned that the invasion was coming, under a global public spotlight that had already been turned on, and the certain widespread censure that would accompany the invasion, would be far different than the *fait accompli* of Czechoslovakia in 1968. And in a close call, this added dimension to the challenge faced by the Soviets could be enough to tip the balance of an internal Soviet decision process—if the Western political offensive were done early enough, before too many decisions had been made and implementation lines had been crossed.

Much the same can be said about the Polish martial law action itself. However one interprets the debate over who said what to whom regarding Soviet military backup, the evidence is pretty conclusive that Jaruzelski himself and many other members of the Polish regime were greatly concerned that events could spin out of their control. Much of Jaruzelski's effort to rationalize his action may appear duplicitous, but there is ample evidence that his concern for the consequences of widespread violence and his repugnance at the thought of having to draw on Soviet military participation were genuine.

The main reason a Polish military crackdown was not attempted earlier clearly had been the belief by Kania and Jaruzelski then that an attempt to do so would result in widespread resistance, quite likely accompanied by rebellion in parts of the military and security forces, and a complete breakdown of control. Apparently, both Kania and Jaruzelski viewed the worst of all outcomes as one in which this occurred and resulted in the defeat of the martial crackdown. Thus they viewed an attempt at martial law as carrying a high risk; to avoid what they considered the worst outcome, they would be forced to resort to what they considered the second worst outcome—a call for military assistance from Moscow. This had all the characteristics of a potentially “lose-lose” situation.

An example of Kania's perspective is contained in a report from the Hungarian ambassador in Poland describing to his leaders a discussion he

had with the Polish first secretary on 18 September. The date of this discussion put it just a few days after the meetings of the Polish National Defense Committee and Politburo at which Kania had been described as opposing a growing sentiment for imposition of martial law. It was also right between two meetings of the Polish Council of Ministers—of which Kania was not a member—to discuss emergency measures.

According to the Hungarian Ambassador's message, Kania told him of the deliberations on martial law that had been held in the preceding days. He compared the situation in Poland to that of Hungary in 1956, and said that if the Polish martial law plan were imposed "today" it would provoke "a wide-spread national strike and it would certainly bring the masses out on the streets too. In that case force would have to be used not against hostile elements but against the masses. . . . Polish communists have assessed their forces. For such action their resources would be insufficient and thus the support of allied forces would be necessary. The consequences of this would, however, set back the development of socialism by decades."¹⁷

Kania made these statements to the Hungarian ambassador as an explanation for delaying the introduction of martial law until the regime had more time to "win over the masses." KGB reporting from Warsaw, however, had concluded some time earlier that Kania had no intention of ever putting himself in a situation in which he had to call on outside military intervention, and that he was therefore unwilling and unable to carry out "the necessary means." This had also been the KGB view of Jaruzelski through the summer of 1981. At one time the KGB recommended that Moscow engineer the replacement of both, initially aiming at the party congress in July as the opportunity. The Soviet political leadership agreed that Kania had to be ousted, but concluded that Jaruzelski was the only Polish leader who possessed the authority to carry out martial law.¹⁸ The initial effort to replace Kania with one of the party hard-liners—at the July party congress—failed, ironically, mainly because of Jaruzelski.

By September, the KGB assessments had concluded, as had at least some U.S. intelligence assessments, that Jaruzelski's attitude was hardening. The KGB station in Warsaw reported then that it was convinced Jaruzelski was ready to institute "decisive measures." The KGB reporting portrays a significant Soviet role in Kania's replacement by Jaruzelski

17. "Report to the Politburo from Hungarian Ambassador Jozsef Garamvolgyi, 18 September 1981," *Poland, 1980-82: Compendium*.

18. The KGB assessments of the situation in Poland in the months preceding martial law are described in Andrews and Mitrokhin, *Sword and the Shield*, 520-28.

at the mid-October party plenum. To what extent the outcome was due to Moscow's pressures and how much was the result of an independent action by the Poles themselves can be debated, but a meeting of the minds clearly was evident.

It is also evident that the divergence in views between Jaruzelski and Kania at this point was not over whether martial law imposition carried great risk of exploding. But Jaruzelski apparently had become convinced that an attempt was necessary, and had made it known he was prepared to do it. His reasoning was complex, and even the Soviets continued to have some reservations on his motives and commitment. At the 10 December Soviet Politburo meeting, for example, Rusakov complained that in declaring martial law Jaruzelski did not intend to speak about the party, but instead planned to "appeal to Polish nationalist sentiments," and "proclaim a military dictatorship of the sort that existed under Pilsudski." The Pilsudski analogy is probably an apt description of how Jaruzelski perceived his decision.

All of this is by way of background for the judgment that the outcome of the confrontation in Poland in the final months of 1981 was indeed subject to influence by the actions of the United States and its European Allies. What policy choices and courses of action the U.S. government might have chosen, and what impact they might have had, are at this point confined to the realm of counterfactual exercises. In theory, the United States might have chosen to do just what it did—nothing. For the record, this author believes that no U.S. administration could have chosen such a course. Rightly or wrongly, everything the United States claims to stand for would have compelled some effort to deter a plan to impose a military suppression of a popularly based movement seeking greater democracy and economic openness.

No such policy choices were made, because no one saw the necessity for doing so at that time. And while there is enough blame to go around, it begins with the failure to effectively employ the intelligence information.

Author's Note

I would like to record a view on an issue that has been a subject of considerable debate among many who are aware of the role of former Polish military officer, Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski. Recently, some American scholars and Polish officials have asked me if I did not believe that Colonel Kuklinski's reporting for the United States constituted a "betrayal" of his country. This same view has even been expressed in articles by former Polish dissidents, who were the same people whom Colonel Kuklinski was trying to help.

For those who are wedded to a view, perhaps out of a personal need for the relief that holding the view provides, there is little to say. For those who are genuinely willing to examine the question, I would like to ask that they consider the following.

First of all, the entity against which Colonel Kuklinski was "conspiring" was not his homeland of Poland. It was the dictatorial alliance whose power was exerted to bring about the participation of the armed forces of his homeland in a military intervention to suppress a political liberalization movement in the neighboring country of Czechoslovakia. It was this same dictatorial power and military alliance that twelve years later was threatening the same kind of military intervention in his homeland, in an attempt to coerce Polish party and government leaders to employ their own military forces to crush the Polish civil opposition movement. And it was the alleged "inevitability" of this military intervention by this same dictatorial alliance that was cited later by Poland's supreme leader, General Jaruzelski, as the reason for employing Poland's military forces—as a "lesser evil"—to crush the civil opposition of Polish workers and dissidents.

As this study seeks to demonstrate, this "inevitability" was even at the time subject to challenge. And the information possessed by the United States at the time—most important the information provided by Colonel Kuklinski—offered at least a chance to derail the military suppression of the civil opposition movement. If the military suppression had been deterred because of efforts taken by Colonel Kuklinski at the risk of his own life,

would he be judged today as a hero or a villain? This question does not rest on judgments as to whether the Polish leadership could in fact have been deterred from carrying out the military suppression for which they had long been preparing. The question is—was it worth trying? And how does a person who tried, at the risk of his life, become condemned?

Sources

The information available to U.S. policy officials on unfolding events leading to martial law in Poland begins with what was presented in the public media. This study draws on the contents of virtually all *New York Times* articles on Poland from the strike at the Gdansk shipyard in August 1980 through the end of December 1981. For consistency and continuity, the descriptions stay with the *Times* as the main public media source during the entire period covered, but for the high points of crisis, such as December 1980 and December 1981, articles from the *Washington Post* were also drawn on, largely because of its use as a public platform by the U.S. administration and as a depository for “officials speaking on background.”

This is combined with the information received through special intelligence sources, laid out in more than five hundred pages of declassified documents. These declassified intelligence documents are now on deposit at the National Security Archive, Gelman Library, Suite 701, 2130 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20037.

- *National Intelligence Daily (NID)* reports on Poland from July 1980 through December 1981 (364 intelligence reports ranging from one to five pages in length) from the Intelligence Community’s daily reporting. Includes “Situation Reports,” and analytic commentary on unfolding events, and periodic “Special Analyses.” Also *Alert Memoranda* warning of potential crisis events usually appeared in the *NID* one day after they were disseminated to the President and a few top policy officials.
- “Approaching the Brink: Moscow and the Polish Crisis, November–December 1980,” *CIA Intelligence Memorandum* (disseminated in late December 1980, specific date for document not given).
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The following list is, obviously, not intended to represent a comprehensive bibliography, but rather the listing of the works drawn on for this study. Some, such as the Andrew-Mitrokhin book, are the source of newly available documentary information. Several others were used as sources of invaluable background and additional detail on the social, political, and economic events that gave birth to and nurtured the civil opposition movement in Poland. For this the author tried to draw mainly on the works of individuals who were in Poland at the time, in positions in which they were specifically responsible for observing and reporting events, either through the media or diplomatic channels, and most of whose works were published within a few years after martial law was imposed, and before the release of most of the archival material now available. Other books and journal articles on this list were drawn on as a source for the perceptions and subsequent commentary by U.S. policy officials regarding their understanding of the intelligence they had received at the time. And of course the public article by Ryzard Kuklinski is in a category of importance all by itself.

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